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He me of the best of the revival and e .ic messages struck from the anvil of orld's anguish by a loved and familiar v c who describes himself as "a country pre.:her," but whose voice and books reach far beyond his native lowlands in North Carolina.

Dr. Havn - finds men preaching "a Gospel that is Goc dynamite" while living "firecracker lives and says the need is "not a better pastora.e, nor more learning, nor more machinery, nor more publicity, nor a more engaging personality, but a double portion of the old-time Power."

'Road to Revival' is a helpful volume of virile messages, crisp, direct and in the everyday language with which the average Christian is familiar. A fundamental message in modern terms.

ROAD TO REVIVAL

By
VANCE HAVNER
Author of "By the Still Waters" and
"The Secret of Christian Joy"

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PREFACE

THE sermons included in this collection have been preached in special meetings and Bible conferences over the country. Most of them have appeared in Christian magazines and we thank the following for permission to reprint articles: *Revelation,* of Philadelphia, for "Wonderful," "Stir Up the Gift of God," "Where Is the Lord God of Elijah?" "Where Are the Marks of the Cross?" "Nothing in His Hand," and "Jesus Christ, the Same"; to *Moody Monthly,* of Chicago, for "Prophetic Doctrine and Practical Duty"; to *Western Recorder,* of Louisville, Ky., for "Shields of Brass," and to the *Temple Evangelist* of Fort Wayne, Ind., for "Why Have the Showers Been Withholden?"

The messages are written very much as spoken, with the peculiarities which distinguish sermons from essays. No attempt has been made to eliminate occasional repetitions of thought or expression in the different messages. They go out with the author's desire and prayer that primarily they may help believers along the "road to revival" and thereby bring many unsaved to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

VANCE HAVNER.

Hickory, N. C.

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I

ROAD TO REVIVAL

HE eighteenth chapter of First Kings sets before us in application the road to revival. In the seventeenth chapter, Elijah, that solitary, rugged prophet of God, broke suddenly upon the scene to announce before King Ahab a three-year drought. Then he hid himself at God's command by the brook Cherith. In the eighteenth chapter he shows himself at God's command before Ahab again. It would be well if every preacher hid first at Cherith before appearing at Carmel. Then there would be fewer failures and more fire, falling Fire from above.

Elijah's second appearance before Ahab finds famine in Samaria. We are living in a spiritual famine nowadays, and there is need of a prophet from God's hiding place. There can be such a man in any age if he will pay the price. Elijah was no superman, he was subject to like passions as we are, but he prayed earnestly and in that he outstrips us. He could pray down both fire and water and we need both today, fire of power and showers of blessing. But we are all so busy hurrying hither and thither in a great fever about nothing that we would never dream of staying awhile at Cherith. "A waste of time," we efficient, quantity-producing Americans would call it. So we hustle around trying to do things for God before we have allowed

Him to do things for us. "He who waits on God loses no time"; Elijah needed Cherith and Paul needed Arabia and you and I had better "come apart," lest we do come apart and go to pieces!

Elijah encountered first of all Obadiah, the governor of Ahab's house. Now Obadiah was a good man and feared God, but like many another he was working with the wrong crowd. He was lined up with Ahab when he should have taken his stand with Elijah, the separated man of God. And he is a perfect type of thousands of Christians today who fear God at heart but are trying to better conditions in league with the powers that be, instead of praying for revival. Obadiah was out at Ahab's command looking for grass when he should have been praying for rain and calling men to repent and return to God. Sin was the trouble then as it is today, and when men turned to God the showers fell. What a waste of time then to be out running around with this little club and that little campaign, boosting this project and backing this program, trying to find a little grass when the real trouble is politely ignored! For that reason our soul loathes the Obadiah policy in our churches trying with parties and banquets and pageants and pep meetings and performances borrowed from the world to stir up fire that must fall from above. We grant that sometimes a little grass may be discovered by some of these foragers, but never was a drought broken by such pitiful expeditions. We have had enough of the program of Ahab and Obadiah: it is time to assemble on Carmel, and prove God by the test of Fire.

There is no more tragic sight than an Obadiah, in the

pulpit or out, entangled with the affairs of this world and infected with its futile enthusiasms when he ought to be burdened for the sins of the people. In his day, Spurgeon, crying out against ministers who attended the theatre, said, "The fact is that many would like to unite church and stage, cards and prayer, dancing and sacraments. If we are powerless to stem this torrent, we can at least warn men of its existence and entreat them to keep out of it. When the old faith is gone, and enthusiasm for the Gospel is extinct, it is no wonder that people seek something else in the way of delight. Lacking bread, they feed on ashes; rejecting the way of the Lord, they run greedily in the path of folly." Today this sort of preaching would be branded unethical for an easy-going Rotarianism takes the place of repentance and Obadiah all too often gets his orders in the palace of Ahab instead of lining up with Elijah to call men back to God.

Doubtless Obadiah honored Elijah and respected his power with God, but one suspects that he felt it a better policy for himself to be diplomatic and stand in with the government. Today no group of men is persecuted more than the few prophets who insist on repentance and confession of sin and the old-time Fire from above. And it is tragic that much of their persecution comes from Obadiahs, who deem them alarmists and sensationalists and who prefer a grass-hunting expedition under Ahab to a Carmel experience with Elijah. We do not defend all the methods and practices of our modern prophets; some of them give us grief and pain. But the remedy they propose is the only one that will work, bitter medicine though it may be. They shock us terri-

bly at times, but we had better be shocked than stupefied. We are weary with looking for grass with Ahab; God is calling us, though sometimes through rather rough voices, to halt no longer between two opinions; we shall not need to look for grass when God sends rain.

Then Elijah met Ahab, who asked, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" This stern old man of God was not the first nor last of that succession of trouble-makers who through the ages have kept nations off the rocks and God's people from slumbering their time away. We are not speaking here of that pestiferous, mosquito sort of pulpiteers who live to fight while they fight to live. But we do mean that noble line of prophets and preachers who have aroused sanctuary slumberers and given wicked rulers insomnia by crying aloud and sparing not instead of keeping silent in an evil time. Of this sort was Samuel, who made the elders tremble at his coming; Jeremiah, the timid soul whom God made a defenced city, an iron pillar and a brazen wall; Ezekiel, with his forehead harder than adamant against a sinful nation; Micah, who wailed as the dragons and mourned as the owls, which must have been awfully disturbing to the peace; Amos, the country preacher, who horrified the elite and offended dignified Amaziah, the court preacher; John the Baptist, who stood by a riverside and made it uncomfortable in the king's palace; Paul, who exceedingly troubled Philippi and created no small stir in Ephesus and won the title of a "world upsetter." And what shall we say of Savonarola and John Knox and Martin Luther and John Wesley and George Whitefield and Charles G. Finney and Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday, who

gave no quarter to Satan, saint, or sinner, until men assembled at Carmel and God answered by fire. For these follow in the steps of Another Who was accused of perverting the nation in His day, that Divine Disturber Who makes us restless until we rest in Him.

Elijah answered Ahab's taunting question with a stern pronouncement, which immediately put the shoe on the right foot: "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and thou hast followed Baalim." As we have just said, there was a sense in which Elijah was a troubler of Israel in that he stirred them from their complacency; but the real troubler was Ahab and his sinful house. Someone has said that preachers used to point the finger at the individual and say, like Nathan to David, "Thou art the man!" But today too many wave a hand at the audience in general and no one knows just who is being addressed.

Then Elijah called for a gathering of the priests of Baal for a dramatic showdown. When they and the people had assembled, he cried, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." It is time today to draw lines and make men face the issue. Too long have we dwelt in spiritual half truths, ethical fogs, and moral twilights. Our church life has mixed with the world, until being a Christian means nothing; and if some prophet calls for men to declare themselves and challenge believers to surrender and separation, he is accused of tearing up churches and upsetting communities. Alas, men have settled on their lees and rested at ease in Zion and con-

formed themselves to the court of Ahab until they resent being called out into the open to show their true colors. Of course, it is an uncomfortable and disturbing procedure when men have been let alone so long and he who calls people to it is in for a thankless job; but there can be no revival until men cease halting between two opinions.

Elijah proposed next that sacrifices be offered to Baal and to Jehovah; the priests of Baal would call on him and Elijah would call on God and "the God that answereth by fire, let him be God." We read that the people answered, "It is well spoken." I do not believe that people have changed much, and would be willing today to agree to such a test, but so little fire has been seen lately that men are asking, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Down through the ages it has ever been thus: the hearts of men have grown skeptical and disillusioned and doubtful until another Elijah came along who walked with God and could pray down fire from heaven, and then revival has come.

And let it never be forgotten that here is the real test: "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." Men have made finances and figures the test, and the church with most statistics in its favor has been adjudged most favored of God. Fame has been made the criterion and publicity has created much that God never approved from heaven. And their number is legion who, in their Christian experiences, would have it read, "The God Who answereth by feelings, let Him be God." But the test is FIRE, supernatural fire, not the strange fire of Nadab and Abihu, but the heavenly flame of Pentecost. Too many of our meetings can be ac-

counted for on purely natural grounds: we meet and sing and talk and pray and nothing happens that cannot be explained. We need some meetings that cannot be accounted for nor be explained away, where men must shake their heads and say, "We have seen strange things today." Some may attribute it to new wine, but it was that sort of meeting that added three thousand souls to the church in a day. The infidel who stood at a burning church and explained his presence there by saying, "I never saw this church on fire before," would be found multiplied by thousands if spiritually our assemblies caught on fire from above. Even fundamentalists do not escape here, for all too often they have the facts but still lack the Flame. God is not revealed so much in correct theology; heads may be right and hearts still be wrong. Painted fire may even be added to touch up the doctrine, but painted fire is not Pentecost fire, it will not burn.

Think of the many tricks by which the church today apes the world to attract men and money. The business and financial and social methods of the age have been brought into the sanctuary, and the cleverness of man is employed to do the work of God. But the world has us beaten from the start at that game and God will not honor it. God works from above with fire from heaven and we put the Gospel to shame by stirring up a fire from our own sparks. Even the world knows the difference, and men only laugh at a church trying to beat the world at its own game. One meeting where God answers by fire is worth all our convocations in the energy of the flesh.

Elijah and the priests of Baal went ahead with their

test and, of course, there was no answer from the heathen god. Then we read that Elijah began the demonstration of the true God by repairing the altar of the Lord that was broken down. Never was there a revival that did not so begin. And if today God answers from heaven we must begin to repair His broken altars. Altars of consecration where once we gave ourselves to God and promised to do His will alone; where we offered Him our talents and time and possessions, ourselves, but with the years we have kept back part of the price and lied unto God until it is a wonder we do not drop dead like Ananias and Sapphira; altars of dedication where we gave our children to God, but later chose our way for them and denied God; family altars where once we gathered to read the Word and commit our way unto the Lord, but now abandoned with the silly excuse that since times have changed, it is no longer practical; altars of praise and testimony where once the redeemed of the Lord said so, but sin and worldliness and neglect have closed our lips and stolen our song; altars of service where once we lived only, always, for the King, but now deserted because we live for self and none beside, just as if Jesus had never lived, just as He had never died. Here is our task, to repair these broken altars, and all our pious dodges and clever substitutes to avoid repentance will never avail. Stained-glass windows and robed choirs and anthems and banquets and dramas and eloquence in the pulpit and elegance in the pew have never fooled God. He demands truth in the inward parts, and heaven will keep silent and no Fire will ever fall until we approach Him with rebuilt altars in the name of the Lord.

So Elijah prayed, and the Fire fell and consumed sacrifice, wood, stones, dust, and water, and all the people fell on their faces and said, " The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God." I believe that our own generation, wicked and cynical as it is, would recognize fire from heaven if there were enough of it today to attract attention. But, alas, impotent Christians and churches will never bring men and women down on their faces before God. If we stopped half of our feverish and futile " kingdom work " without the King and repaired God's altars and sought the old-time power, we would need no argument to convince an unbelieving world that " the Lord, he is the God."

It is quite natural that immediately following this dramatic climax on Carmel, Elijah should say to Ahab, " Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is sound of abundance of rain." When God's altars are repaired and the Lord answers by fire and men recognize the true God, the showers of blessing are on the way. Today we sing:

" Showers of blessing,
Showers of blessing we need;
Mercy drops 'round us are falling,
But for the showers we plead."

But we might have had the showers long ago if we had met the conditions. God is not reluctant, but we are rebellious and He is waiting for His altars to be restored We sing:

" There shall be showers of blessing."

But a cynical world wonders why it is always " shall

be," something coming which never arrives, and even the church has grown discouraged and sings it only to save its face. And yet there is nothing uncertain, indefinite, hit-or-miss, about revival. The road is clearly marked and it is plain hypocrisy merely to sing about showers of blessing when we will not pay the price for abundance of rain. We act as though revival were a matter of chance or whim, a sudden occasional notion on the part of God with which we have little to do. But God is ever ready to bless His people when they repair the broken altars and pray for the old-time fire.

This dramatic chapter closes with a second thrilling scene on Carmel. Ahab goes to eat and drink and Elijah goes to the mountaintop, we read, and what a snapshot that gives us of these two characters, a contrast that appears in every generation. Today men eat and drink, but thank God for the solitary souls who stay apart to pray. Will you be one who, while men eat and drink as in the days of Noe, will seek the quiet place alone with God and pray for showers of blessing? The outlook may seem hopeless and there may be no sign in the sky, but God keeps His promise and there will come the cloud like a man's hand and then the rain. May God raise up in this day of time-serving Obadiahs in Ahab's court separated prophets who, though men of like passions as we are, can pray down fire from above!

II

ARE YOU "THERE"?

"And the word of the Lord came unto him [Elijah], saying, Get thee hence and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee THERE. . . .

"Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell THERE: behold, I have commanded a widow woman THERE to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was THERE . . ."

—I KINGS 17: 2–4, 9, 10.

I DO not believe that the ravens would have fed Elijah anywhere else, nor would the widow woman have appeared anywhere else except "THERE." God did not say, "Elijah, ramble around as you please and I will provide for you." "THERE" was the place of God's will for Elijah—the place of His Purpose, the place of His Power and the place of His Provision.

"THERE" WAS THE PLACE OF GOD'S PURPOSE. God has a "THERE" for you, somewhere He wants you to be, something He wants you to do. You can never be truly happy elsewhere, nor can you please God anywhere but "there." You may do lovely things and become a "success," but always there will be the haunting sense of having chosen life's second best.

Sir Thomas Lipton, the English sportsman, won many yachting prizes, but he never could capture the American cup. One day, showing a friend his glittering col-

lection of trophies, he suddenly said, with a wave of the hand, "And I'd give them all for the one I didn't get!" So, however many of earth's awards and crowns we may gain, if we miss the reward of God's approval, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, we shall feel at the close of our day that we would gladly give them all for the one we missed. Woodrow Wilson spoke of "being defeated by one's secondary successes." Verily, we are cheated when we choose our own way, whatever we may attain in it, if we miss the purpose of God.

"THERE" is the place of blessing. When Jacob wandered from Bethel and trouble descended upon him at Shalem, God commanded him, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell THERE" (Gen. 35: 1). Sometimes we go back to Bethel during the revival but we do not dwell there.

"THERE" is not a particular emotional experience; it is simply the place of God's will. David "served his generation by the will of God" (Acts 13: 36), and in so doing he proved that he was "THERE." Epaphras prayed that the saints might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col. 4: 12), in other words, that they might be "THERE." Our Lord could say to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17: 4). He was always "THERE"!

God has a Cherith and a Zarephath for you. It may be across the street, it may be across the sea. Some sing, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord," but they are not willing to stay where He wants them to stay. A radio preacher tells of receiving a letter from

a young lady who was sure that she could do great things for the Lord if she could move to Pittsburgh, but was sure she could do nothing in the small town where she was. It developed that she refused to work in the small tasks in her home church because she felt too big for it. We have plenty of "Pittsburgh Christians," eagles on hummingbird nests, always too big for where they are.

In the account of the Great Commission, we overlook the setting: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them" (Matt. 28:16). They were in the place of the Divine appointing, therefore they received the Divine appointment. Some of us have had no commission because we are not "there," at the place of His appointing.

In the second place, "THERE" WAS THE PLACE OF GOD'S POWER. I do not believe that the miracle of the ravens and the meal barrel would have occurred anywhere but "THERE." Men wonder why they never feel God's power or see any evidences of His working. It is because they are out of His purpose, not in His will. We say, "What power Elijah had!" but he had no power in himself, he was simply "THERE," in the place of power. We might say, "What power that radio has!" "What power that electric light has!" But they are very frail contraptions, they are simply in the place of power, connected with the source. When the traffic officer stops you as you drive down the street, it is not his strength that does it; you could drive over him. It is his authority that makes you halt; he represents something greater than himself.

So we are nothing in ourselves, but when we are in the place of God's purpose we have His power, and greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

Men have wondered at the power of George Muller. He had no power of himself; he was simply "THERE," in the place of God's purpose for George Muller. Hudson Taylor said he once thought God was looking for men strong enough to use, but he learned that God was looking for men weak enough to use. The lad who supplied the loaves and fishes for the feeding of the multitude would have been nonplussed if you had told him that morning that he had enough food for several thousand people. He did not know what he had until Jesus took it and broke it and blessed it and passed it around. Nor do you know what you have until you give it to the Lord.

Only when we are "THERE," in the place of His purpose, are we in the place of His power. Samson did a great many remarkable things, but he never was much; he did not stay "THERE." He may have looked better after his haircut but he lost his strength. Too many Christians let the world give them a haircut. One day they carry off the gates of Gaza, but next day they may be in the lap of Delilah; they do not abide in Christ, they do not stay "THERE."

There is no place "just as good" as "THERE," the place of God's purpose. We try to strike bargains with the Lord, offer to do something else, seek a compromise or substitute. We work terribly hard at something that may be fine and lovely, but it is not His choice and inwardly we are rebellious. A minister brother tells of a stubborn youngster in a home who

was told by his mother to sit down. He refused twice, and then she made him sit down; but he said, "Mother, I may be sitting down but I'm standing up inside!" So often do we seem to be yielded to God and living "THERE," but there is inward rebellion. And God rates rebellion as a grievous thing: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (I Sam. 15: 23).

Finally, "THERE" WAS THE PLACE OF GOD'S PROVISION. There would have been no bread, no flesh, no meal, for Elijah anywhere but "THERE." "Where God guides, He provides" is a well-worn proverb but gloriously true. Notice that God said, "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee THERE"; "I have commanded a widow woman THERE to sustain thee." Elijah had gone on ahead and made arrangements. Strange arrangements they were—I doubt that stranger arrangements ever were made for boarding a preacher! But the plan worked, as it always does when God is in it. He is responsible for our upkeep when we follow His directions, but He is not responsible for any expenses not included in His schedule.

Elijah began his interview with the widow by asking, like our Lord at the well of Samaria, for a drink of water. You will observe that when Elijah found this woman, she was engaged at a menial task, gathering sticks, but before he left she had seen the miraculous. From the menial to the miraculous! So our Lord found Peter fishing for fish and made him a fisher of men; found Matthew collecting taxes and made him a Gospel writer. If we are faithful in the least, God will show us much. Fetching a drink of water does not

cost much, although a cup of water given in His Name shall not be unrewarded. But it does not test faith, so Elijah asked next for a morsel of bread and the first cake at that. Now it looked as though there would be only one cake, so here was a real test for the widow woman. Alas, we give God the crumbs, not the cake; the scraps and fragments and leftovers of time and thought and talent and money. Malachi reproved the Jews in his day who kept the good animals given them for sacrifice and gave the Lord the sick and crippled. How he might thunder at us today who give God the crumbs from our tables and eat the cake ourselves!

The widow woman was fearful, but Elijah reassured her: "Fear not . . . for thus saith the Lord . . ." God had promised to provide and that was enough.

"In some way or other, the Lord will provide.
It may not be my way, it may not be thy way,
And yet in His own way, the Lord will provide."

Of course, God did not fill the barrel, as we Americans would demand; He simply supplied enough. He has promised to supply our needs, not our wants (Phil. 4: 19). So long as we are in His will, we shall have health enough, time enough, work enough, money enough to do what He wants done. Why should we want any more? And He never asks us to do more than we can do by His grace. He may seem to ask the impossible and we may be sure that we are going to fail, but if we are willing to fail for God, we won't fail. Nobody ever failed who was honest with God.

How we do let circumstances blind us to the all-

sufficiency of God! I think of the morning when Elisha's servant must have walked out on the back porch and discovered an army sent to capture the great prophet. (In those days God's preachers were such troublemakers that they sent the militia after them.) The servant was horrified to see soldiers to the right of him, soldiers to the left of him, soldiers before him, soldiers everywhere. But Elisha came out calmly, and instead of bothering to look around him, he looked higher and saw angels to the right of him, angels to the left of him, angels before him, angels everywhere, for the angels of the Lord were encamping round about him who feared God to deliver him. No wonder Elisha could pray for this frightened servant's eyes to be opened that he might see! And we need such an eye opener today.

Yes, when we are "THERE," in the place of God's purpose, we are in the place of His power and provision. ARE YOU "THERE"? A little girl in a Midwestern city came forward one night after I had preached from this text and whispered in my ear, "I'm here but I'm afraid I'm not THERE." Many of us are "here," among those present, but we are not "THERE," in the place of His choosing. We may be "THERE" the moment we resign the right to our own lives and let Him take control. Do not grow uneasy if guidance does not come in a moment. What He wants is your yielded will, and the minute you give Him that, you are "THERE," although it may be some time before He shows you just where it is geographically.

May I relate to you a chapter out of my own experience? I began to preach when I was a boy. After

four years of preaching, I went away to school and in the period that followed I became unsettled in my beliefs. I felt, under modernistic and liberal influences, that I should adapt the Gospel to the modern mind, which, by the way, is not very modern and not much mind. There came a day when my ministry failed and I returned to my old country home in the hills. That winter my father died and I was left with my mother, having only a country grocery store as our support, and that was robbed and burned to the ground in the following spring! During those months the Lord spoke to my soul and led me to see that if I returned to the old Gospel and preached it, He would clear the track for me. So I renounced the "new approach" and got into the Cherith and Zarephath of God's will for me. First, I had to return to the church where I had preached the "new position" and give them the message God had given me. The way has not always been easy, but I can testify that God had gone before and made arrangements. I have found "THERE" to be the place of His abundant power and marvelous provision. The years since that experience have been one continued story of "meal in a barrel."

Are you "THERE"?

III

"STIR UP THE GIFT OF GOD"

(II Timothy 1: 6.)

I BELIEVE that Timothy was afflicted with a constitutional timidity. Paul reminds him to let no man despise his youth, and to the Corinthians he wrote: "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be among you without fear" (I Cor. 16: 10). He was a splendid young preacher, with good ancestry and in dead earnest, but he needed to be set on fire. I know a young preacher who reminds me of Timothy. He is a genuine and promising Christian, but, somehow, one wants to build a fire within him. If his faith and his facts had fire he would move mountains.

So Paul advises Timothy to kindle the sacred Flame within him. Modern Americans in steam-heated apartments miss the meaning here by not having to rise, as some of us country-bred mortals had to do, on cold winter mornings to shiver before an old-fashioned fireplace while we uncovered leftover coals from the night before, applied kindling, and then blew hard until the flame appeared. Such is the picture here. There come times in our experiences when the fires of God burn low and we must stir up the heavenly flame within our hearts.

Timothy was not exhorted to stir up himself. It is not our fire but God's that we are to kindle. The Nadabs and Abihus offer strange fire aplenty today and there are those who kindle a fire and compass themselves about with sparks and walk in their own light to their own sorrow (Isa. 50: 11). What was the "gift of God" in the mind of Paul? It was not Timothy's ability or his own enthusiasm. It is stated in another verse: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given thee by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (I Tim. 4: 14). It was the gift of the Spirit for his peculiar ministry, the supreme qualification for preaching and witnessing and service. And in application it represents the fire of the Spirit in each and all of us believers.

Timothy was exhorted to let no man despise his youth. As a rule, we do not expect much of young preachers. We say, "He'll be fine after he has finished school," or "After he has had experience he will be a power," and we forget that the main qualification for young or old, the Holy Spirit, he may have now as much as he ever will. Without that no preacher can preach whatever his age or training. And unless he have the Holy Fire, more experience will but confirm him in carnality. Many a preacher never preached better than when he began, for he began in the fire of his first love, before the world and even the church had time to temper his zeal and smother his flame until he became merely "among those present." Paul recognized the value of training, because he exhorted Timothy to study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly divid-

ing the word of truth. He knew the value of experience, for he would have no bishop be a novice. But, above all that, he would say, "Timothy, stir up the Fire, don't get in a rut and don't let them make an ordinary preacher out of you."

What Christians in general, preachers and churches need most today is to stir the embers of the Holy Fire until the heavenly zeal consumes them. Our Lord did not say He would spew us out of His mouth for being too hot but for being lukewarm! Every believer has at least a few coals in his heart, but usually it is a bed of coals instead of a flame. When the Gospel is preached and the breath of the Spirit blows on the hearts you can tell where the fire is, for faces will light up and the glow will return. But the fire has died down. Iniquity abounds and the love of many has waxed cold; they have quenched the Spirit and left their first love. Wet blankets of various sorts have smothered the flame. Many of them are hard put to it to keep themselves warm when they ought to be setting others afire! If for any reason the fire has become coals, stir up the gift of God! Keep aglow at any cost! No price is too great to pay to be a "burning and shining light" for Him! Better go to lengths that may seem absurd to others to keep the fire blazing!

There are so many things that can smother the fire. Of course, wilful sin will do it. Our Lord told us that the candle of testimony may be smothered by the bushel or the bed. The bushel stands for money-making, the cares of business, the temporal concerns of this life. The bed stands for luxury, ease, worldly pleasure, the sloth that so enervates the soul. And most Christian

lights are under either the bushel or the bed! Some are too busy to shine, others are too lazy. The test of any interest is this: what effect does it have on my fire? Does it tone down my zeal? Does it grieve the Spirit?

Neglect will smother the fire. Let the fire alone and it will burn low and the ashes will gather. If we neglect the means of grace, prayer, the Word and holy exercise, we shall soon need a stirring. And never was it easier to grow slothful and complacent than today. The spirit of the times is against the man on fire for God as never before. The very atmosphere is dull, the devil makes our eyelids heavy and fills our minds with cobwebs. The spirit may be willing but the flesh is weak. It is not easy to stir oneself to take hold of God. Drop into the average church service today and you realize the truth of those old lines:

"In vain we tune our formal songs;
In vain we strive to rise;
Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies."

We sleep in the garden while our Lord says in gentle irony, "Sleep on now and take your rest," but He also adds, "Rise, let us be going." We need to take ourselves by the back of the neck and shake ourselves out of our coma and lethargy, cocainized and chloroformed as we are by the spiritual climate of this ungodly age:

"Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve,
And press with vigor on;
A heavenly race demands thy zeal
And an immortal crown."

Then, too, others can quench the Spirit and smother our fire. Every Christian is a contradiction to this old world. He crosses it at every point. He goes against the grain from beginning to end. From the day that he is born again until the day that he goes on to be with the Lord, he must stand against the current of a world always going the other way. God expects him to be "beside himself," "a fool for Christ's sake," "drunk on new wine." If he allows it, men will tone him down, steal the joy of his salvation, and reduce him to the dreary level of the general average. If the devil cannot keep us from being saved, he next endeavors to make average Christians of us, and in this he usually succeeds. He tames the holy recklessness of God's dare-saints until they sink into the drab pattern of most of us, "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null." The devil does not mind our joining church if we behave like most of those who are already inside. But when a real, wide-awake Christian breezes along, taking the Gospel seriously, the devil grows alarmed and begins plotting his downfall. He gets plenty of assistance right in the church, for many church folk do not like to have their Laodicean complacency upset by these who turn the world upside down. So they conspire with Satan to turn the young Christian's fever into a chill. There are always plenty of human wet blankets to smother the zealot's flame, and they have put out more spiritual fires than have all the skeptics and infidels. I remember well that when I, as a boy, started out to preach, those who discouraged me most were not the folk commonly called "sinners" but the smug circle of religionists at home in this world who cautioned me to take it

easy, and reminded me that I should not be righteous overmuch!

Sometimes one encounters such discouragement most at home and finds his greatest foes in this matter in his own household. No wonder our Lord used the strong word "hate" to tell us how much higher should be our devotion to Him than to the dearest of earth! Throughout His life, whether saying as a boy in the temple, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" or at Cana saying to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" or when His relatives desired to speak to Him and He said, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother," He always made it clear that His first obligation was to God and He suffered not even the dearest of earth to hinder that devotion. Doubtless His relatives would have smothered His fire if He had allowed it, even as His friends thought He was beside Himself (Mark 3: 21).

Certainly, fear can choke the fire. Paul says to Timothy in the very word next to the passage we are considering, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of a sound mind." The man who hid his talent said, "I was afraid." The fires that fear has smothered—fear of the past or present or future, fear of others, of failure, of sickness, of death! Whatever fear you may have, it is not of God, for He hath not given us such a spirit. But He has given us power and love and a sound mind and these gifts we should stir up! We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, and we ought to stir up that! We should stir up the spirit

of power, for we have been promised power—"Ye shall receive power." We should stir up love, for perfect love casts out fear. And we should stir up the spirit of discipline or of a sound mind, that which Matthew Henry called "a peaceable enjoyment of ourselves," for, said he, "We are ofttimes discouraged in our way and work by creatures of our own fancy and imagination which sober solid thinking would obviate and easily answer." We need to rout the spectres and hobgoblins of our minds by a sanctified common sense, without which all other sense is nonsense.

Let us remember that stirring up the gift of God is our business. God will not do it for us. We must rouse ourselves from our lethargy and get down to business in prayer and feeding upon the Word and holy exercise.

"O for a passionate passion for souls,
O for a pity that yearns;
O for a love that loves even to death,
O for a fire that burns!"

It is related that in Scotland years ago, before the day of matches, the fires had gone out throughout a community. The people set out looking for someone who had a fire. At last, far up on a hillside, they found a humble home where the hearthstone glowed with cheery flame. Soon they were carrying coals here and there to replenish their own blackened fireplaces. Today there are weary hearts, discouraged souls, needy churches looking for a soul with a fire, someone who

has kept aglow in spite of the world, the flesh and the devil.

What has smothered your fire? Renounce it, yield afresh to God and stir up His gift within you!

IV

WONDERFUL

"*His name shall be called Wonderful.*"—ISAIAH 9: 6.

THAT little word "wonderful" has been worn pretty threadbare in these days. We speak of "a wonderful time," "a wonderful person," "a wonderful book," and apply the word to a thousand things entirely unworthy of it. But I would give the word its rightful place as set forth in God's Word. The prophet Isaiah said, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, "His name shall be called Wonderful."

Truly He was wonderful in the way He fulfilled the many prophecies concerning Him. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. 1: 1) spoke to Abraham and provided a nation through which our Lord should come. Then he spoke to Jacob and revealed the chosen tribe of the Saviour's ancestry, the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49: 10). There must also be a family, so to Isaiah He made known that it should be of Jesse. To Micah He whispered the name of the birthplace, Bethlehem. Through Daniel He made known the time of Jesus' birth (Dan. 9: 25). In Malachi He spoke of the forerunner, John the Baptist, and in Jonah He set forth a picture of our Lord's resur-

rection. And when the Christ came, He fulfilled to the letter all these predictions. Truly that is wonderful!

He was wonderful in His birth. He was the earthly child of a Heavenly Father and the heavenly child of an earthly mother. If men had arranged His birthplace they might have chosen a palace; God chose a barn. Men might have prepared a royal crib; God prepared a feed trough. Men might have provided silken robes; God chose the swaddling clothes of a poor peasant. Men might have selected choice perfumes and spices; God came in the malodors of a stable. Think of it! The Prince of Glory couldn't find room in a Bethlehem boarding house! The King of kings, the son of a carpenter's wife! What a rebuke to our pride that He Who was so rich became so poor, when we who are so poor pretend to be so rich!

As a baby, our Lord was made known to shepherds, who represent the working class; to wise men, who represent the student class; and to Simeon and Anna, who represent the worshipping class. Since that day He has been the crown of all true work: "The work of God is to believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6: 29). He has been the object of all true study for "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2: 3). He is the object of all true worship, and one day at His Name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Truly, in all this He is Wonderful!

He was wonderful in His life. With only a few years to live, at the age of thirty He was still a carpenter. He never was in a hurry, for He is the First and the Last

and why should He hurry? He was the Bread of Life, but He went hungry for forty days. He offered the Water of Life, but He Himself thirsted for an ordinary drink of plain water. He could still a raging sea or He could bless little children. He could preach to multitudes and He could also take time out to talk with a poor woman taken in sin. He wrote no books, but ever since He lived, the presses have ground out libraries about Him. He founded no colleges, but the world's scholarship has said, "No man spake like this man." He led no army, but He has been the spiritual Captain of more soldiers than ever followed the Cæsars and Napoleons. He did not bother with politics, but He has upset every government that has rejected Him, and He is the Smiting Stone that will smash the last world empire. He had no money, but all charitable institutions look back to Him as their inspiration. Ingersoll founded no orphanages, nor did Tom Paine provide homes for the aged!

Our Lord never married, but He attended wedding feasts. He had no home, but every Christian home bears His name. He was a baby and sanctified childhood. He was a young man and sanctified youth. He was an adult and sanctified maturity. But He did not die of old age: He is eternal and he that liveth and believeth in Him shall never die.

He was the King of kings but the kings of earth sought to kill Him. He was the Teacher of all teachers, but the scribes of His day would have nothing to do with Him. He was the object of all worship, but the religious people of His day crucified Him. He was the Sinless One, but it was the sinners who invited Him to

dinner. He was the Prince of Glory, but it was the common people who heard Him gladly.

He could stop a funeral procession to raise the dead, but nobody stopped His funeral procession when He carried His own deathbed in the form of a cross. He laid aside a crown in glory, but all that earth gave Him was a diadem of thorns. His hands touched feverish brows and made the sick well again, but our hands slapped His face until His countenance was marred. He spat on the ground and made clay that blind eyes might see; we spat in His face until His eyes could hardly see.

He was wonderful in His death. Condemned by the authorities of His time, He was murdered outside the city gates as though His blood might defile Jerusalem. Even nature revolted: the sun would not shine, an earthquake aroused the dead, and the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. Before Him as He died every type of humanity went by. Ignorance was there in the Roman soldiers who knew not what they did. Insolence passed by, wagging its head. Irreverence looked on and taunted Him that He had saved others, but could not save Himself. Indifference was there in the people who stood beholding. And of all that motley throng, the one who was blessed most was the dying thief who

> *"rejoiced to see*
> *That fountain in his day;*
> *And there may I, though vile as he,*
> *Wash all my sins away."*

The Lord Jesus Christ was wonderful in His resurrection. When His body was laid in the grave, Pilate gave orders at the request of the Pharisees to seal the sepulchre. "Make it as sure as ye can" (Matt. 27: 65). And they did! Nature made it as sure as she could, for a large stone was before the sepulchre, but "up from the grave He arose," the angel of the Lord rolled the stone away and sat upon it. The Roman government made it as sure as it could and placed its seal upon the grave; but "up from the grave He arose" to break the seal of Rome as later He broke the back of Rome and as even later He will smash the last Roman world empire. Unbelief made it as sure as it could for Pharisaism tried to discredit His resurrection but "up from the grave He arose" and whenever unbelief thinks it has buried the truth, the "corpse" always comes to life in the midst of the funeral to outlive all the pallbearers. Death made it as sure as it could but "up from the grave He arose" and now He carries the keys of death and hell. The world, the flesh and the devil conspired to keep Him in the grave but "up from the grave He arose" that "death might be swallowed up in victory."

He is wonderful in His present ministry. He is not a mere memory in a Palestine tomb. He ever liveth to make intercession for us and if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. He not only arose, He ascended, yet where two or three gather in His Name He is present. He is not far away but nigh, for "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by" and "where cross the crowded ways of man" we hear the voice of the Son of Man.

Finally, He is wonderful in His power to save. They called His name Jesus for He should save His people from their sins, and truly if any man be in Him he is a new creation.

A godly woman married to a sour and cynical sinner persuaded him one evening to go to revival services in the near-by church. That night he was gloriously saved. Next morning before breakfast he stood before the window looking out on the bleak winter landscape. But it was not bleak to him. He called to his wife, "Come, see how beautiful the whole world is this morning. It looks as though the very trees are clapping their hands." And why not? "For ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isa. 55: 12).

"Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen;
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauty shine
Since I know as now I know,
I am His and He is mine."

A passenger on one of the great trains going west was observed to exclaim every few minutes the word "wonderful!" He would feel the plush on the seats, look out the window, look at the passengers; and everything he saw drew from him the word "wonderful!" When curiosity got the better of a fellow passenger and

he inquired what all this meant, the man replied, "Until a few days ago I was blind from my birth. But a great doctor recently gave me my sight and now everything looks wonderful to me. The landscape, you passengers, even these seats look wonderful to me."

And when the Great Physician touches our blind eyes so that we see, does not everything take on a new appearance because we have seen Him? And shall we not find ourselves singing to His praise?

"Wonderful, wonderful, Jesus is to me:
Prince of Peace, Counsellor, Mighty God is He;
Saving me and keeping me from all sin and shame,
He is my Redeemer, praise His Name!"

V

WHERE ARE THE MARKS OF THE CROSS?

"But he [Thomas] said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."—JOHN 20: 25.

"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."
—GALATIANS 6: 17.

"As he is, so are we in this world."—I JOHN 4: 17.

IT is to be expected that the preaching of the cross should be foolishness to them that perish. God said it (I Cor. 1: 18), and the Calvary message of blood-bought redemption, of living through One Who died, of being justified by One Who was condemned, of being blessed by One Who was made a curse, of being saved by One Who could not save Himself—such a message has always been and will be distasteful to the natural man.

But we have come to the day when the preaching of the cross is foolishness not only to the world but to the professing church as well. It has become foolishness in much of modern preaching where a "slaughterhouse theology" is held up to ridicule and modern lepers are told that Abana and Pharpar are as good as Jordan and that Naaman today need not dip in the fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

Not only in preaching but in practise does this hold true today in churches where thousands expect to reach heaven on the merit of their own good works, which, if

it could be done, would, of course, mean that our Lord need not have died. They sing about the cross and pay it the tribute of their lips, but so far as their hope of salvation is concerned, it is just as surely foolishness to them as to the millions outside the church.

But we go even deeper to say that among Christians who truly are resting upon the finished work of Calvary for their souls' salvation there is a sense in which the preaching of the cross is still foolishness to them. For there are two aspects of our Lord's work in His atoning death, and some know the one but are painfully ignorant of the other. Our Lord bore our sins once for all in His own body on the tree, but not only were our sins nailed with Him there: our very selves, our old man, our old nature, all this was so identified with Him that we can truly say, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2: 20) and "our old man is crucified with him" (Rom. 6: 6) and "I am crucified to the world" (Gal. 6: 14), "dead with Christ" (Col. 2: 20). The sinner is dead IN sin, the Saviour died FOR sin, and the saint is dead TO sin with his Lord, a glorious fact which he is to make real in actual daily experience as he reckons himself dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6: 11). Our Saviour did not die that we might dodge the cross but that we might die with Him there, and it is possible to rest upon His cross work for salvation from sin's penalty without experiencing the work of the cross for salvation from sin's power, so that this part of the preaching of the cross is still foolishness.

Thomas demanded to see the marks of the cross in the resurrection Christ before he would believe. Today an

unbelieving world is looking for the marks of the cross in those who claim to have died to sin with their Saviour and who profess to live His resurrection life. But few there are who, like Paul, bear the marks of the Lord Jesus, the evidences of death to sin and life unto God. Yet as our Lord is, so are we in this world and nothing will so convince men of our identification with Him as the marks of His cross. Alas, we strive to impress them almost every other way. They hear oratory and see cleverness and efficiency and even earnestness; the old Adam parades under the guise of the Gospel, and preaching becomes another profession and church work merely another interest, along with club and community concerns. The carnal man labors overtime "working FOR Jesus," but the Lord Himself is not seen.

One thinks of those weary disciples trudging toward Emmaus who recited to the unrecognized Christ, their companion, the crucifixion story. Then they told Him some of the reports that He had risen and added, "And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: BUT HIM THEY SAW NOT" (Luke 24: 24). There is the tragedy of today: men are looking for the resurrection Christ, the living Christ, and they see us, but Him they see not. They see Him not in our church services, they see Him not in our sermons, they see Him not in our lives. We get in His way and use His name to advertise ourselves, and men see us and turn away sick and disgusted. They are not looking for us but for Him, and a lot of our feverish haranguing about Him only hides Him from view.

It is so easy to be orthodox in one's beliefs about Him

and even earnest in one's labors for Him and yet not really make Him known. Sometimes in advertised places and with much-advertised persons one has expected to see the Lord and has looked in vain for marks of Calvary. Ability, enthusiasm, action, statistics, all these have appeared but flesh uncrucified has spoiled it all. For, no matter how well we know it theoretically, we are ever in danger of forgetting that the way of the cross cuts across every plan and purpose and principle of natural will and wisdom, that success with Him means failure with us, and life with Him death to us. There are many medals but few scars, and seeking our own crowns we miss His.

What are the marks of the cross? Not self-inflicted austerities, asceticism, the rigors of the Middle Ages brought up to date, neglecting of the body to satisfy the flesh. Let all who get off on that crazy track get back to Colossians and learn the way of the Lord more perfectly. Those who labor to produce such stigmata to attract attention to their saintliness are worse than worldlings. It is not our deadness but His life that we want to make known, and His risen life is not a gloomy thing. We die but He lives, and Christ in us is an experience of joy unspeakable and full of glory. These hypocrites of a sad countenance who appear unto men to fast have their reward.

The marks of the cross are simply the marks of our identification with our Lord, death to our own plans and purposes, death to our own right to our lives, that He might have His way with us and ours. It does involve self-denial, and although the battle may sometimes rage around a specific matter, the real issue is

not giving up this particular thing and that but renouncing our claim to ourselves that we may truly say, "Not I but Christ." It has been said that the cross is simply *I* crossed out and so it is. That does mean conflicts and agonies and throes and struggles, but only because we hate to give up living our own lives. The minute we resign and He takes over, His life becomes ours.

There will be marks of this cross experience, but they are glorified by His Presence within. As we grow older in His life, we recognize the cross marks when we see them. Often they are written on the countenance. Here is one who abandoned a self-chosen career for a God-chosen call. There is one who started out earnestly but with a severity and harshness that had to be burned out in the furnace of affliction. Yonder is another who mistook his own fervency of spirit for the filling of the Spirit and learned the difference in no easy fashion. Over there is one who spoke with tongues of men and angels and understood mysteries but had not love until he found the more excellent way. Think you that such souls learned their lesson under a shade tree in a rocking chair? No, they carry the marks but they also carry Him, and He glorifies the marks of death with the touch of His life.

So do not play up the negative and hide the positive. We are dead to sin but that we may be alive unto God; crucified that we may live. We magnify our burdens instead of our blessings, our fears instead of faith, and forget that beyond the cross lies the crown. We should yet be in our sins if the Christ of the cross had not also come out of the grave, and we shall be

dead in experience if we only die to self and live not in Him.

Thomas knew that our Lord had died. He needed no evidence of that. He wanted to see the cross marks to be sure that He was alive. Thomases today demand to see in us the marks of the cross but not for the sake of the marks; what they are after is to see that He lives in us. Going around with heavy countenance, letting everybody know that you do not play cards, dance or attend the theatre is not going to convince Thomas. But if he sees in you a living Christ Who so meets your need that the world has lost its charm, he will be constrained to acknowledge Him as Lord and God.

How is it done? Paul lived this crucified, risen life by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2: 20). Peter gave up nets and boats, but it took him three years to give up himself. There must be not merely the renouncing of things but of self and then an off-looking unto Him to live His life where we have failed. God reckons us dead with Christ, and we are to reckon as He reckons and make it real by daily making to die the doings of the body. But we also live with Him and by the Spirit we daily take His life for ours, we walk in the Spirit and do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

You are His witness before a world of doubt. Where are the marks of the Lord Jesus? Do men see in you the evidence that you have gone with Him the way of Calvary and the open grave and that He has taken the place of you? They are not looking for the marks of your convictions, your cleverness, your character, but for the marks of the cross and the Christ. God help you not to fail them.

VI

SHIELDS OF BRASS

THE prosperous reign of Solomon was followed by the apostasy under Rehoboam. You will remember how he listened to the rash advice of the young men and plunged the country into a course of idolatry. Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord; they provoked Him to jealousy; they built high places and images and groves; there were also sodomites in the land; and Judah did according to all the abominations of the heathen nations (I Kings 14: 21–24).

It is not surprising that on the heels of such apostasy Jerusalem should be attacked by Shishak, king of Egypt. We read that he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord. All over our land today are hearts and homes and churches once rich with Divine wealth but now ransacked and barren because Shishak has stolen the treasures of the Lord.

Note one other detail in this account of the invasion by Shishak. He took away (I Kings 14: 26) all the shields of gold which Solomon had made, and Reboboam made in their stead brazen shields. Now these golden shields of Solomon were doubtless beautiful.

They symbolized the prosperity with which God had blessed His people. But Shishak took them and Reho-

boam, to cover his embarrassment, substituted shields of brass, and everyone must have been reminded of the contrast between his time and the days of Solomon every time they saw the brazen shields.

We often see the spiritual counterpart of this in Christian experience. Satan steals our shields of gold and we try to cover our defeat and hide our chagrin by making in their stead shields of brass!

At Pentecost the church began with shields of gold. But that which began in the Spirit tried later to make itself perfect in the flesh. Constantine embraced Christianity and the church joined hands with the world. Harnack tells us: "As the proofs of the Spirit and of power subsided after the beginning of the third century, the extraordinary moral tension also became relaxed, paving the way gradually for a morality which was adapted to a worldly life."

The church began to compromise, so as to be less offensive to an ungodly age. When Thomas Aquinas visited the pope and was being shown the splendor of the papal treasures, the pontiff remarked, "You will observe that the church no longer has to say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" And Aquinas answered, "Neither can she now say, 'Rise and walk'"! Shishak had stolen the shields of gold and men were substituting shields of brass.

The great preachers, prophets, and reformers of church history were men whom God raised up to restore to the church its shields of gold. Savonarola, Luther, Knox, Wesley, Fox, Zinzendorf, Moody—these men God called in times of declension and burdened them with the evils of their day. While time-serving

churchmen rested at ease in Zion and lukewarm believers saw nothing to be excited about, these seers could not be deceived. They saw through the sham and veneer and false pretense and vain show and knew full well that the church was waving shields of brass to hide her embarrassment. They knew that the golden shields had been stolen and that brass, though it may gleam and glitter, is only brass. They refused to be satisfied with "second bests" and stirred the church to recover her lost treasure.

May God raise up another such prophet today! The church, like Samson of old, has been shorn of power and goes out to shake itself Sunday morning and night, yet it wists not that the Spirit of the Lord has departed. There is need of a voice in the wilderness, a preacher who wears no tags and labels, who is not intimidated by the glare of brass, but who sees in it only man's substitute for God's gold.

"The good is the enemy of the best." The church is taken up today with much that is good, but she is not carrying on in the power of Pentecost and there is no use trying to conceal the fact that Shishak has substituted his "good" for God's best.

The world is not deceived: they know that we have been robbed and all our clever tricks do not deceive. There is no use trying to save our faces. Shishak has taken the shields of gold, our testimony and our power, and we waste time in activities that may help to hide it when our greatest need is to confess it and regain what we have lost.

One has only to look at individual churches today to see the ravages of Shishak. We can appreciate the sex-

ton who rang the funeral bell by mistake just before the regular preaching service. "It makes no difference," he said; "the church is dead anyway." "Ichabod" might be written over many a sanctuary, for the glory has departed.

When we say this, we do not have in mind dilapidated churches with the congregation departed and roof falling in. We used to think of Sardis in Revelation as being such a church, but we read that it had a name to be alive but was dead. Ephesus too was busy and active and orthodox, but had left its first love. In both cases there was much waving of brazen shields to make up for the shields of gold.

Much church activity today is simply brass trying to shine like gold. There is sometimes a haunting consciousness that the fire is strange fire like that of Nadab and Abihu, and not the supernatural fire from above. The young prophet of Elisha's day did not go on chopping wood with the handle after the axehead was gone, but there is a lot of frantic activity today that bespeaks lack of power instead of fulness of power, just as sometimes a speaker pounds the desk most vigorously when he has least to say.

It is a sad day for a church when Shishak steals its shields of gold. Sadder still is its plight if, instead of recognizing its loss and repenting of its sin and recovering its lost power, it works doubly hard so that no one will suspect that anything is wrong. But God knows and even the world detects the difference for, burnish as you will, brass can never be gold.

Preachers had better take this truth to heart. Shishak is out to steal the preacher's shield of gold. Some-

times he does it with modernism. Sometimes he exchanges comforts and earthly honors, glittering brazen shields for God's best. More than once have we seen a preacher castaway who once served God with power, but somewhere along the road he struck a bargain with Shishak and now his shield is brass.

Maybe he chose ecclesiastical promotion and trimmed his message to suit the powers that be. Maybe he allowed a multitude of small duties to smother the prophetic passion in him and his study became an office. Maybe he wasted his energies on various small affairs, good in themselves but to be delegated to others that he might give himself to the ministry of the Word and prayer.

Our Lord is coming soon and we are to hold fast what we have that no man take our crown (Rev. 3: 11). Satan is clever: if he cannot entice a consecrated preacher into grosser forms of sin, he sets about to cheat him out of God's best. He allows him the good: the brother is allowed to be active and earnest and diligent, but it is brass and not gold.

I am not so afraid of some preachers drifting into worldliness or modernism or immorality as I fear that gradually and imperceptibly they may be snared into accepting something almost as good as God's best for them. A brazen shield may be better than no shield at all, but why accept anything less than gold when gold has been provided?

Christians in general today are continually in danger from Shishak. How many there are who make out with a second-rate experience, a " just-as-good " substitute of the devil. How much of our prayer-life is

brass instead of gold! We merely read the Bible, if indeed we do that, instead of feeding upon it. Our witnessing is cheap and tawdry. We sink to the level of the general average, afraid to be different lest our friends accuse us as they did our Lord of being beside ourselves. Shishak steals the joy of our salvation and we try to make out with a false religious enthusiasm, "pep" instead of power. A vast amount of church work is being done today by the same kind of energy with which the world carries on its work. Unconsecrated men and women are transplanted on Sunday from the world into the church upon the mistaken impression that if they can "put things over" outside the church, they can do it inside the church.

We have an idea that church work just must go on; if not in the power of the Lord, it must go on anyway, so David hauls the ark on a cart of his own devising. If Satan has stolen our golden shields, never mind, we will make brazen shields and go on as before. But we don't go on as before. Brass shines, but we and the Lord and even the whole world know that it is not gold.

We are hearing a great deal today about revival and evangelism, more about evangelism than revival. May God save us from a brass revival! God deliver us from imitation awakenings that produce no fruits meet for repentance! We pretend that we want revival, but do not most of us want only a polite and elegant revival that never sees the axe laid to the trees?

Too often have we witnessed innocuous invitations that generalized until nobody could possibly feel convicted. These omnibus invitations brought scores down the aisles in a mere parade that meant no more

than an idle gesture. There is too much spreading cold cream on cancers and dusting off sin with a powder puff. We need a fresh perusal of Finney's sermon on "How to Preach so as to Convert Nobody."

Let us not live in a fool's paradise. Shishak has stolen the shields of gold and we get nowhere by carrying shields of brass. It is often suggested that we never should expose sin in the professing church because it advertises the faults of believers to the world. Well, we are not telling the world anything it did not already know!

David had to acknowledge his sin and repent before the lost joy of salvation was restored. Then and not until then could he teach transgressors God's ways and win sinners unto him. Nor can we win them today until we take the same route that David took. There is nothing to be gained by trying to hide our embarrassment with brazen shields. Let us return to God for His best.

VII

WHY HAVE THE SHOWERS BEEN WITHHOLDEN?

"Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain."—JEREMIAH 3: 3.

THE early and latter rains were symbols of God's blessing upon His people. Since they were a sign of His favor, He withheld them on account of sin. It is not my purpose here to discuss the dispensational interpretation of the latter rain as it applies to Israel. I am concerned with the application of our text to the latter rain of revival upon God's people, why the showers have been withholden.

It is an undeniable fact that we have before us today the greatest opportunity for living and preaching the Gospel in all history. The fields are white unto harvest, and I had better be living right now than at any period in the record of the church. But it is also pitifully true that at no time have Bible Christians bungled their opportunity more miserably than today. At no time have believers handled more awkwardly their privileges than at this time.

We are living in a land which has been graciously blessed of God but which is now sinking into paganism. The last days and the perilous times have come. Any man who can hold an open Bible in one hand and

a newspaper in the other and yet cannot tell what time it is needs to hear our Lord's sharp word, "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matt. 16: 3). On the other hand, Christians all over the world are praying for revival. There are prayer bands and intercession bands and supplication bands praying, "Wilt thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee?" "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."

Yet there is no revival. There are localized, sporadic stirrings in the Body of Christ, as there have always been. But although God's alarm clock is going off every hour in earthquakes, floods, famines, droughts, pestilences, wars and rumors of wars, there is no sign of repentance. Our nation is not at the family altar and the prayer meeting but at the dance hall and the liquor shop. Revelry, not repentance, is the order of the day. Sunday after Sunday we sing:

"There shall be showers of blessing;
This is the promise of love;
There shall be seasons refreshing
Sent from the Saviour above;
There shall be showers of blessing,
Precious reviving again;
Over the hills and the valleys
Sound of abundance of rain."

But always we sing, "There shall be showers of blessing"; and it is becoming embarrassing that we keep it in the future tense. Finney tells in his auto-

biography how, in the days before his conversion, he was asked whether he wanted the local church to pray for him; and he replied to the effect that he did not see that it would do any good: they had been praying for years for revival and had never had that, so he saw no use in their praying for him. Of course, that was a bitter attitude; but many unbelievers might argue to that effect today. Where is the revival of which we sing and for which we pray?

There are reasons why the showers have been withholden: "Therefore the showers have been withholden. . . ." For one thing, many Christians do not expect revival. They argue that the apostasy is on and the days are as those of Noah, so there will be no awakening. Some have surrendered to pious defeatism and are sitting with folded hands listening to lectures on prophetic mysteries, while millions might yet be saved if God's people stirred themselves to take hold of God. Now, prophetic lectures have their place and never were more fitting than today; but there is a grievous malady amongst us affecting thousands who go from meeting to meeting, with notebook and pencil, taking notes from favorite speakers, absorbing information like sponges, but not really doing anything about it after they hear it. In Finney's day, while he was arousing men to the Gospel, the Millerites were assembling on a mountain top for a return of the Lord, which did not occur. There is, in some quarters, an attitude that savors more of Miller than of Finney. And there is a smug and complacent fundamentalism that hides behind walls of orthodoxy, merely defending the truth but forgetting that the best defensive in an offensive.

We are not here merely to hold the fort but to take the fort, to storm the ramparts of the enemy! If anyone lives on the defensive it should be the devil, for he has been defeated and we are the victors. Ours is the winning side, and we are not a beleaguered garrison waiting for the Lord to come to our relief. Faith is the victory; and the devil will flee if resisted, so we ought to keep him on the run.

Again, there seems to be no common understanding of the causes and conditions of revival, no agreement as to how it may be brought about. We seem to think that it just happens like a thunderstorm and that we have little to do with antecedent conditions. But even thunderstorms do not just happen, they have causes; and while revival, like all else, is wrapped in the sovereignty of God, He has offered to pour out blessing if we meet certain conditions. Confession of sin, for instance, is required; but we do not like to bite the dust and own up to God, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." Yet we must, before we can pray, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." Our text, "Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain," is followed by a significant word, "And thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed." How that describes our hardness today, our stubborn wills! We pretend to repent, but real repentance that gets under the surface of our shallow and superficial piety and cracks up our church faces and smashes our obstinate rebellion is rare indeed. "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouths and lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they sted-

fast in his covenant" (Ps. 78: 36, 37). Our denominations claim that they want revival, but generally we want to have a revival and save our face, when the first thing we must lose is our face. Fallow ground must be broken up, even at the cost of humiliation and embarrassment. God will not rain showers of blessing on fallow ground, for that would mean only more briars and weeds. He will not waste His blessings on ground that has not been prepared, and to prepare the soil of our hearts means that they must be disturbed and broken up. But, of course, we do not like to be stirred and agitated nowadays in our churches, so we preserve a smooth exterior, while underneath are roots of bitterness and hidden sins. There certainly are definite conditions of revival; and when they are met, revival will come. But God has not changed the price of revival, nor has He put any of His blessings on bargain counters at reduced rates.

Another reason why the showers have been withholden is that there is no unity among God's people, they are not of one accord. Many have turned aside unto vain jangling (I Tim. 1: 5, 6) and, "not holding fast the head," have divided into Paulites and Cephasites, Apollonians and the Christ-party. To illustrate: modernism has a representative voice on the air today in a nation-wide hook-up. But if sound believers were allowed a like opportunity, we doubt that they could agree on a representative man. Then, too, so many are "disciples of a phrase" instead of the Person, Christ Himself, that they become champions of a pet doctrine instead of witnesses unto Him. Here is a grievous thing and a hindrance to God's working.

We need a Whitefield, a Finney, a Moody, who will preach the whole scale of Bible truth instead of sawing on one note; who will proclaim a solid, substantial message of sin black and hell hot and judgment certain and eternity long and salvation free by grace through faith in Christ. There is too much back-fence haranguing and hair-splitting, peddling of knickknacks and sandwiches, when men are dying for the meat of the Word. We need to hear afresh the pulpit thunders of an Edwards or Knox or Cartwright or Wesley, when giants of God, fresh from the Cherith of prayer, stood at the Carmel of judgment and, knowing the terror of the Lord, persuaded men, the love of Christ constraining them; preaching a dynamite Gospel that brought down showers of blessing on believers and brought hardened sinners to their knees in genuine repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That reminds us of another reason for spiritual drought today: the lost note of condemnation of sin. There is a tendency to paint a lovely picture of Christ and then say, "There He is, now fall in love with Him!" But the natural man cannot love Christ nor feel any need of Him until he faces the fact of sin and his need of a Saviour. We must begin our message where the Bible begins, with God; where John 3: 16 begins, with God; where Romans begins, with a holy God and a broken law and a guilty race of sinners. We try to treat the patient when he does not know he is sick. Men do not see themselves as sinners, so they do not grow sick of sin nor forsake it; they join our churches on empty professions of faith, carrying their

sins with them. We are calling the righteous to repentance.

When our Lord talked with the woman at the well, He spoke of several matters; but it was when He touched on the sin question in her life that she said, "I perceive that thou art a prophet." It is a mark of the prophet to make men face sin. Then, when she spoke with her townspeople, she said, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" It is a mark of the Christ that in His presence men cry, "I am a sinful man, O Lord." And when her townspeople believed on Him, it was first for the saying of the woman that He had told her all that ever she did. It is a mark of Christian testimony that Christ dealt with our sins. Men must see sin to be sin and themselves to be sinners before they will want a Saviour. Sins of Christians need to be exposed and condemned, and Nathan must tell David, "Thou art the man," before there will be a returning to the Lord and a recovering of the lost joy of salvation, true marks of a real revival.

Finally, we have lost the note of joy in a prejudice against emotion. When Philip preached in Samaria, there was a revival followed by great joy. And what sort of joy is this that does not affect our feelings? True, feelings are dangerous and not to be unduly emphasized; but man has intelligence, will, and emotion; and a real experience of God's grace will affect all three. What would love, music, patriotism, any of life's deep interests be worth if they did not stir emotion? Certainly life's greatest experience should stir us as nothing else. True, some Christians begin with

a fever and end with a chill; but, because some, with joy, receive the Word and yet endure for but a while (Matt. 13: 20, 21), we should not discredit that true joy of the Lord that is to remain in us "that our joy may be full." We have repressed our rejoicing until, in most churches, amens would be no scarcer if they were ten dollars apiece. Yet, as Finney said, it is doubtful that we shall have revival until Mr. Wet-Eyes and Mr. Amen are in the congregation.

These are only a few reasons for spiritual drought in our day and, therefore, have the showers been withholden. Let us "ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

"Showers of blessing we need;
Mercy drops 'round us are falling
But for the showers we plead."

VIII

"WHERE IS THE LORD GOD OF ELIJAH?"

THE prophet Elijah towers like a spiritual Colossus in his day and generation. Although he was a man of like passions as we are, he moved among the time-serving sycophants of his day like a giant among pygmies. He could pray down fire or water, whichever was needed at the time, flames of judgment on Carmel or showers of rain on parched land. From the day that he burst on the scene to prophesy three years of dry weather until he went to heaven in a blaze of glory, he lived a colorful and picturesque drama stranger than any fiction.

Elijah rose like a tower of strength in a weary land. There never was anything indefinite about him. No dictionary was needed when he preached. There were no half-tones and vague uncertainties about him. He never lived in the No Man's Land of clever religious half-truths. He did not belong to spiritual fogs and moral twilights; his was the solitary grandeur of those few souls in any age who get their orders from Headquarters, who speak with authority because they hide themselves at Cherith before showing themselves at Carmel.

But there came the day with Elijah as there must

with each and all of his kind when his fight had been fought, his course finished, with his faith kept. There came the morning when he, like Enoch long before him, should be translated and not see death. That amazing scene when the second man in history to go to heaven without dying left earth for glory is described sublimely in the second chapter of Second Kings. It opens with God's rugged prophet walking from Gilgal beside the man he called from the plow handles to be his successor. Strangely enough, it seems that three times Elijah tries to shake off his companion Elisha by saying, "The Lord hath sent me to Bethel," "The Lord hath sent me to Jericho," "The Lord hath sent me to Jordan." But like Ruth cleaving to Naomi, Elisha would not be shaken off. The reasons are clear: he did not want to leave his spiritual father, he wanted to see him translated to heaven; but, above all, he wanted a double portion of the spirit of Elijah. He was out that day on serious business and was resolved to see it through.

Along the road that day stood a number of theological students, sons of the prophets. They knew that great things were to happen that day. They mentioned it to Elisha: "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head today?" But you will observe that they only "stood to view afar off"; it was Elijah and Elisha who went on.

In every age and generation there has been at least one Elijah who has walked with God in power. And on his heels there has always come at least one Elisha who wants God's very best, the double portion of His Spirit. There have always been plenty of prophets'

sons, good fellows and well-meaning, who have stood by the road while Elijah and Elisha went by. They have been interested onlookers, have enquired into the matter, but it is only Elisha who will not be denied, who follows on in dead earnest, until he sees the glory of God—it is only Elisha who comes back with the mantle of Elijah.

I am not speaking of some weird and vague experience of "second blessing." But it is a known fact, whether we like to admit it or not, that most of us are like the sons of the prophets: we stand by the roadside and know that great things are possible, we enquire about them, we stand to view afar off, but ours is not the mantle that divides Jordan. There are a few in every age who take seriously our Lord's parables about importunity in prayer, the woman and the judge, the man who had a friend call at midnight. The sons of the prophets had much that was good, but Elisha pressed through to the best. There is a power with God and men that comes to those who will stop short of nothing less, who wait long before God, not because He is reluctant but because we are rebellious, who go far with God and walk close to Him, who will not be put off at Bethel or Jericho.

When Elijah asked his faithful companion what it was that he desired, Elisha knew what he wanted. He could have asked for many things, but there was one consuming desire for a double portion of the Spirit. Would that we today knew what we need most! Not a better pastorate, or more learning, or more machinery, or more publicity, or a more engaging personality, but a double portion of the old-time Power. We sing

about it, but we are willing to do without it. We can take it or leave it, and so long as we feel that way about it we usually leave it.

Then came the whirlwind, the horses and chariots of fire, and Elijah went up while Elisha cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" He spoke the truth for Elijah was worth more to Israel than a standing army. Better part with all her horsemen and chariots than with him! Little did Ahab realize when he called Elijah the troubler of Israel that he was indeed her bulwark. And little does America know today that godly people and not armies and navies are her best protection.

Then follows the climax of Elisha's quest for the double portion of the Spirit. We read that he rent his own clothes and took up the mantle of Elijah. That holds for us today a blessed lesson. We must tear up the wrappings of our own self-righteousnesses if we are to be clothed from above. Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and only when we see them so and rend our garments can we be clad in His righteousness alone to stand faultless before the Throne. And not only that, but the believer who would live and work in the power of God must rend the garments of self-sufficiency and tear up the vestments of the flesh if he is to go clothed in the Lord. God will not drop the mantle of His Spirit around the dirty raiment of our own goodness. We must rend our own clothes if we wear the garment of God.

Elisha stood by Jordan, smote the waters with the mantle and said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" and the waters parted for him to go over. We have

come today to times so dark and drear that millions are asking, "Where is God?" Some are asking it in irony and unbelief, like those of Jeremiah's time who sneered, "Where is the Word of the Lord? Let it come now." Some are asking it in the spirit of Isaiah when he cried, "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down" (Isa. 64: 1). We live in an hour when the foundations of civilization are crumbling, the night of apostasy is deepening, lawlessness runs wild to its awful climax, the powers of anti-Christ increase and abound, and wars and rumors of wars belt the globe. Yet the Church of God, with the only hope and cure for mankind's sin and misery, rests, for the most part, at ease in Zion, and we who claim that Name above every name make mud pies and daisy chains and twiddle our thumbs while a world sweeps over the brink of disaster. We preach a Gospel that is God's dynamite and we live firecracker lives. We sing of showers of blessing and the old-time power and faith, the victory and higher ground, and then we leave it all in the hymn books and go home. We read that when our Lord held a service the congregation went home amazed and glorifying God and filled with fear and saying, "We have seen strange things today" (Luke 5: 26). How many, do you think, go from our meetings today in such a frame of mind? The early church lived in such power that men durst not join themselves unto them; they stood in awe of Pentecostal fire. Today the world slaps the church on the back and indulges in coarse familiarity with the things of God, for they see little to stun them into silence before the presence of the Lord. Did we care as we should, we

would at least be embarrassed to sing so loudly about a power which even the world knows we do not have. "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

I am afraid that too many of us are like these theological students who saw Elijah and Elisha go by. They believed theoretically that Elijah was to be taken, but so weak was their actual faith that they wanted later to send out a scouting party to look for him lest the Spirit of God had cast him upon a mountain or into a valley! Here was knowledge without faith, the same sort that talks and sings today about the great realities of the Gospel but never actually believes them. We study Sunday-school lessons about Elijah, but who seeks his mantle? We read and sing about Pentecost, but who is willing to live as those Christians lived?

So we go on at this poor, dying rate, trying to swim across Jordans that God would part before us if we smote them with His mantle. How we do reason among ourselves today, devising ways and means to get across Jordan! We build bridges, we launch boats, we rush in like fools to ford it instead of standing still in faith to see God part the waters. We labor in our might and power, for we are too hurried and too busy to wait upon the Lord. We read that when Elisha went over Jordan the sons of the prophets said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha," and they met him and bowed themselves to the ground before him. Men know real power when they see it work, but they are not bowing in awe today because they see little that they cannot explain. Most of our religious activity today is only the work of the world moved over into

the church on Sunday. It is the same power that men see all week in the regular routine; it merely wears a different garb and holds a hymn book. The strange fire of Nadab and Abihu can be accounted for. Men need to see God at work.

Let it be observed that, after he crossed Jordan, Elisha used his power first in healing the city's water supply. It was a constructive touch and we need to learn that lesson today. There are many who, if they had the mantle of Elijah, would immediately summon all the reporters in order to crash the front page. God's power is healing, and certainly the waters are poisoned today. They do not need sugar but salt, not the sugar of social gospels and ethical programs but the salt of which our Lord spoke when He called us the salt of the earth. We are the salt of the earth, mind you, not the sugar, and our ministry is truly to cleanse and not just to change the taste.

But on the heels of this incident comes another which has troubled many, the episode of the children mocking Elisha and their being torn by the bears. Here, although they were torn and not slain, there certainly was a destructive touch, and many have wondered what good there could be in such procedure. Well, it teaches one thing we do well to remember: you cannot fool with God's man. Even little children could not do it and get away with it. More than one poor mortal has undertaken to ridicule the minister of God and put his hand on God's anointed only to reap a bitter vengeance.

We have read of John McNeill saying once in a church where he was encountering criticism: "John

McNeill and God have come to an understanding. Keep your hands off John McNeill! " Poking fun at God's prophets is dangerous business.

" Where is the Lord God of Elijah? " We stand before Jordan today and wave our wands, but the waters do not divide. The reason is not hard to find. Few there be of Elisha's sort who will not be stopped at Gilgal or Jericho but who press on for the double portion. We are not speaking here of tarrying for a Pentecost that has already come. But we do know that the men whom God has blessed with His Spirit in unusual power through the ages have been men in such dead earnest that they would not let the good keep them from the best. They craved a deeper fellowship with God and found it through prevailing prayer, while the rest stood by the wayside and curiously watched them go by. Call it what you will, there is a waiting before God that we hurried modern mortals do not know, that sends a man back to his task with the hand of God upon him in such a fashion that waters part before him which are not moved at our command. It is not that God puts a premium upon fastings and night-long prayers and tears and austerities of the flesh. But He does reward a burning desire for His very best that leaves no stone unturned and follows Elijah to Jordan while others merely watch him go by. Our Lord Himself certainly lived perfectly in the will of God, yet He found it necessary to spend nights in prayer. And shall we poor failing mortals casually snatch from heaven the power that others gained only by fervent and importunate intercession? It is true that our Father giveth liberally and upbraideth not;

but He keeps His choicest blessings for those who really mean business and will not stop at the Gilgal of a mild average experience.

It is interesting to note that when Elijah seemed to be trying to get rid of Elisha, his faithful follower said, "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." Later in Elisha's ministry, when the Shunammite woman comes to him in behalf of her son, he tries to dispose of the matter by sending Gehazi with his staff, but the woman says exactly what he said to Elijah: "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." It is the man who holds on for God's blessing to whom people will come for a blessing. If you would have needy souls drawn to you for help, you must first have clung to One Who is greater.

Men in general and the church in particular are asking, "Where is God?" Our Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. But the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. Who will be a candidate for the mantle of Elijah, the double portion of His Spirit?

IX

PROPHETIC DOCTRINE AND PRACTICAL DUTY

I WOULD be outside my province if I came to you as a Bible teacher and very much so if I came as a specialist in prophecy. The Holy Spirit has not given to me the teaching gift. God's Word speaks of would-be teachers who have no business teaching (I Tim. 1: 7) and of learners who long since should have been teachers (Heb. 5: 12). I have tried to find my place between the Presumptuous Pedagogues in the first verse and the Pathetic Pupils in the second.

We have with us those who belong to neither of these classifications but who are teachers indeed. With them I leave the intricate problems of prophecy. We thank God that while Belshazzar listens today in vain to Chaldeans and astrologers, there are still a few Daniels who can read the handwriting on the wall. The world has its experts and prophets but the Heavenly Hieroglyphics are too much for them and "if all the wiseacres of earth today were laid in a row they never would reach a conclusion." But we thank God that there are among us those whom God has gifted and the Spirit has guided, who have learned from God's sundial that it is later than men think.

I am concerned with the practical issues that grow

out of these profound prophetic truths. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be?" In my part of the country, many have lacked interest in the subject of prophecy because some who have discoursed so vividly on the tenth verse of this third chapter of Second Peter have shown up so poorly in the eleventh verse. The expert in the mystery of prophecy has not always been an example in "what manner of person."

Throughout the Word of God one thing stands out crystal clear in this matter of prophecy: wherever the Holy Spirit sets forth some great prophetic truth, He joins it every time with a practical exhortation as to what we are to do about it. The subject of prophecy has, of course, held an attraction for a great many superficial souls with a flair for the spectacular. Gog and Magog, the 666, the beasts of Revelation, have, indeed, fallen into the hands of too many mere sensationalists who have ranged over the country with wild and weird charts of their own devising, setting dates almost as brazenly as ever the Millerites dared to do. But then any good light will attract a certain number of bugs, so we need not be discouraged by the false to forget the true. Certain it is that no Bible subject holds more practical implications than the matter of prophecy. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved," immediately the rejoinder comes, "What are you going to do about it? What manner of persons ought ye to be?"

The first truth that grows out of all this is, of course, the necessity for preparation. "Prepare to meet thy God." "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an

hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24: 44). A generation ago, "Prepare to meet thy God" was a favorite text of evangelistic preachers. Today over the country at large it has been granted an extended leave of absence. The reason is not hard to find. In many quarters God is no longer regarded as a personal being; hell is a byword; heaven is a joke about St. Peter with a bunch of keys and the judgment day is a medieval superstition. Men no longer believe that they are hastening on to the Great Accounting. But, for all that, there is still a Judge and a judgment and an inflexible standard of righteousness that must be met. But, thank God, it was met long ago in Him Who was made sin for us though He knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He Who is coming is the one and only preparation for His coming. Clad in His righteousness alone are we faultless to stand before the Throne.

I heard a minister tell how he as a boy tried hard to weigh one hundred pounds. He could weigh ninety-five and ninety-six but he could not reach the coveted hundred mark. One day he stepped on the scales and, to his astonishment, went way over the mark. He gave a yell of triumph, but just then he heard a chuckle behind him and looked around to discover that his older brother had put a big foot on the scales.

I know something better than that. God had a mark that I could not reach, but my Elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, did not merely add His weight to mine; He put Himself in my place and God reckons me righteous in Him, because as a convicted sinner I received Him as my Saviour and rest in His finished

work and perfect righteousness. So it is He Who is coming Who prepares me for His coming. In the Christ Who came I am ready for the Christ Who will come.

But "be ye also ready" is not the only message that grows out of prophecy. And right here one thinks of many, many Christians whose position is something like this: "Oh, yes, I know that the Lord is coming. But if one is ready, what more can be done?" Then they bring up the story of the old moderator of some assembly in New England years ago, when the celebrated "dark day" plunged thousands into hysteria thinking the judgment day had arrived. They tell how he asked for the candles to be lit and proceeded with business, saying, "If the Lord is really coming, we can do no better than to be found at our duty." Now that is admirable as far as it goes, but it overlooks something very vital.

The New Testament Christians were not only ready, they were expectant, hilariously anticipating the Lord's return. And we are bidden not only to prepare but to look for our Lord. "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord"; "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." "Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." It is one thing to be ready for someone to come; it is another thing eagerly to expect and await the coming of someone. In my pastoral calling, I am sure that many of my church members were ready for my visits who were not thrilled with anticipation.

If you grew up at home with a sister, I am sure you

recall how that when an ordinary friend called, she was ready but not particularly excited about it: but when the one of her heart's desire was expected, you could tell the difference hours ahead of time. The program of beautification began at least by noon and by the middle of the afternoon the hands on the clock seem to have stuck, so slowly moved the hours.

One wonders about these believers who say they are ready but who act as though it did not matter whether the Lord came or not. It is evident from the Scriptures that joyful expectancy is an evidence of readiness.

But while readiness without expectancy is not the New Testament attitude, there is another position that misses the mark almost as widely. It is possible to be worked up over the coming of the Lord without being stirred up about the Lord Who is coming. One is an event, the other is a Person, and it is the Person Who makes the event. Looking for something to happen is one thing; looking for Someone to come is another. Academic speculation about the Program is dry as dust unless there is joyful expectancy of the Person Who makes the Program. That would be like a bride more interested in the trousseau and the wedding trip than in the groom himself. Certainly, the most important thing about the Lord's return is the Lord.

Let us visualize a small-town railroad station at train time. Inside the little ticket office is the station agent. He is an authority on the train schedule, he has read up on that, he knows when the train is due. Out in the station yard is a young bride-to-be who is looking for her lover to come on the next train. She does not

know a great deal about the train schedules and the only reason why she is interested in this schedule is because of him who is coming. The station agent may be an authority and yet he may be very dull today, because he is not eagerly expecting anyone on the train. The girl in the station yard may not be an authority on the schedule but she is so happy that she can hardly live. If I had to choose between them, I'd rather be the girl in the yard. But I don't have to choose between them, for the old station master also may have dear ones coming in on the train, loved ones whose advent turns the time-table from prose into poetry. And yet it is possible, in this matter of our Lord's coming, to study the time-table and miss the Visitor!

Prophetic truth calls us not only to preparation and expectation but also to purification: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3: 3). And along with that comes the call to separation: "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (II Pet. 3: 11).

In I Corinthians 7: 29–31, there is a combination of prophetic doctrine and practical duty. I have never heard a sermon from that text, but somebody ought to be preaching about it:

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

If this means anything at all, it certainly means that in these last days, in the Saturday evening of the age, in these perilous times, in this night of apostasy, with the mystery of lawlessness nearing its climax, with the flames of judgment already reddening the horizon, we Bible Christians are called upon to practise what we preach and conduct ourselves with a special soberness and seriousness in keeping with the urgency and emergency of the times.

I remember hearing a young missionary relate how that in her last year of nurse's training, a young doctor asked her: "Do you really believe that all men who never have heard of Christ are lost?" She answered, "Yes, doctor, I do." Again he asked, "And do you believe that those who have heard of Him and have not accepted Him are lost?" and she answered, "Yes, I do." Then with a look of utmost seriousness, he said, "Well, all I have to say is that if you believe that, you cannot live like the rest of us do."

If we believe these terrific prophetic truths, then we cannot live like other men. They that sleep sleep in the night and they that be drunken are drunken in the night but we who are of the day must be sober (I Thess. 5: 7, 8). It is against a prophetic background in Romans that we are exhorted to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, to walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying (notice that strife and envying, our respectable sins, are in the same company with low-down immorality!), but —and here is the climax in that verse that changed Augustine from a slave of lust to a slave of Christ—

"put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Now, here are a positive and a negative: some put on Christ in a positive act of faith but keep on exposing themselves wilfully to temptation, making arrangements to sin, flirting with the world, winking at evil, playing hands with Satan, singing hymns lustily but thinking lustfully. Much as we believe prophetic truth, too often we have an argument but not a testimony. We do not live as pilgrims and strangers, we are often starched and ironed but not washed, our Pilgrim's Progress too often includes Vanity Fair on its approved itinerary. We let Delilah shave our locks, and let us remember that while Samson may have looked better after his haircut, he had no power. If there is any Bible truth that walks hand in hand with prophecy, it certainly is God's call to holiness, and if we profess the Blessed Hope we should practise the Blessed Holiness. You will note that the verse says, "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." It is the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin, but we are also called upon to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts (James 4: 8), for we have the responsibility of repentance and confession and abstinence from fleshly lusts that war against the soul.

Along with this, there goes a kindred truth already indicated in our passage, from Romans 13, where we are admonished not to walk in strife and envying. In the fifth chapter of First Thessalonians we have a choice prophetic passage. In verse 2 Paul moves on to bring out of it a call to comfort, and if we had time we should consider prophecy's message of consolation. Next, he asks his readers to have due regard and esteem for God's

ministers, and there is material for a dozen sermons right there. If some who claim to be Bible Christians today had carried their doctrine over and translated it into duty, there would not be so many brokenhearted pastors who have gone to pieces trying to keep together groups of professing fundamentalists who remind us of that brand of matches that won't strike anywhere except on their own box; who write "JESUS ONLY" over their churches but have "US ONLY" written in their hearts.

But I am concerned especially with Paul's next word: "And be at peace among yourselves." Prophetic truth makes for pacification. There is a passage (I Tim. 1: 5–7) which needs to be placarded amongst us today: "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm." We Americans are rather like these Corinthians in our tastes: there is much emphasis on tongues of men and angels; the gifts of prophecy flourish; there are many who understand mysteries and knowledge; amazing faith is displayed in some quarters; much goods is bestowed to feed the poor, and some are martyrs in spirit if not in body. But, for all that, what is this noise I hear over the land? Is it believers singing together, "Blest be the tie that binds"? Not every time. Too often it is the noise of sounding brass and clanging cymbal, the raucous discord of those who have turned aside to vain jangling; Paulites and Cephasites and Apollonians, with a sprinkling of the

Christ party, debating as to which Diotrephes shall have the pre-eminence.

The marks of carnality in Paul's day were not card playing, theatregoing and dancing, but envying, strife, and divisions (I Cor. 3: 3). There are those today who draw back in horror from the first three, and well they may, but unfortunately some of them are past masters at the second three. The Holy Spirit knew that discord and division would be the bane of the church down through the ages, for He warned against that more than against other evils which have engaged most of our attention.

One reason why I want the Lord to come is that I may have the joy of really seeing brethren dwell together in unity. Our prophetic doctrine has certainly parted company with practical duty on this point. If we believe that the time is short, and that we are pilgrims together on the last lap of the journey, it seems to me that our fellowship should be as sweet as that early comradeship of the Acts of the Apostles. There are not many of us at most, and we certainly thin out when, forgetting what manner of Spirit we are of, we occupy ourselves calling down fire on all Samaritans who do not dot all their *i's* and cross all their *t's* according to our private system.

I have read of two war vessels that met in a fog and, after firing at each other for hours, discovered, when the fog lifted, that both flew the same flag!

We are not pleading for unanimity on one hand or for unification on the other. We are pleading for unity, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The message here in I Thessalonians 5 is: "If you believe in

prophecy . . . Be at peace among yourselves." In some parts of our country the fields in springtime are separated by fences visible to the eye. But in autumn the harvest has grown higher than the fences and the fields are as one. It is not necessary to tear down all our fences; but we need revival showers of blessing that will produce a harvest so great that our fences shall not appear.

Finally, we have a duty to the outside world, for prophetic truth calls us to EVANGELIZATION. We are to hasten the coming of the day of God (II Pet. 3: 12) and we do that by winning the lost to Christ, for when the elect number is gathered, the Lord will come. Our Lord is pictured throughout the Word as the Great Gatherer and, however orthodox we may be, if we gather not with Him we scatter abroad (Matt. 12: 30).

Certainly, in this matter it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. It does no good to revel among the clouds of prophetic truth if it stir us not to practise it on the cobblestones, questing for souls. In an experience meeting conducted by Mr. Moody, a man boasted of having lived on the Mount of Transfiguration for fifteen years. Mr. Moody asked, "Have you ever won a soul to Christ?" When the man answered, "No," Mr. Moody replied, "We don't want that kind of mountain-top experience."

Prophetic truth, like all other truth, should be fuel for the fires of evangelism. The Mystery from above must be lived out amid the Misery here below. Our Lord said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." It is evident, then, that a true disciple is a soul-

winner. It is possible to sit on the shore discussing the signs of the times when we ought to be driven by the signs of the times to launch out into the deep and let down our nets for a draught. Dwight L. Moody had very ordinary fishing tackle but, in a day when many were discussing ways and means, what tackle to use, and where to fish, Moody went fishing with what he had and outdid them all. The real test of how much we believe of prophetic truth is this: What are we doing to warn men to flee from the wrath to come? It is not enough to lament the apostasy so vividly described in the book of Jude. It is not even enough to build up ourselves in the faith, pray in the Holy Ghost, keep ourselves in the love of God, and look for the mercy of the Lord. There is a further duty: "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire: hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

It is high time we stirred up ourselves, first, as Isaiah said, to take hold of God, and then to take hold of others to snatch them from destruction. I have often thought that one of the most unappreciated tasks on earth is that of a Pullman porter who must go down that mahogany lane early in the morning to arouse passengers who are in no mood to be awakened. But this business of awakening people is a thankless job, whether it apply to Pullman porters at 6 A. M. or to preachers of the Gospel at 11 A. M. For too many Christians come to church to rest at ease in Zion, while across their faces one can almost read that sign often seen on hotel room doors: "Please Do Not Disturb."

The power of the Spirit is a stimulant, not a sedative,

and Bible believers should appear drunk and not doped. To believe the solemn truths of prophecy and then make our way complacently through a world of sin and shame is not merely unfortunate, it is criminal. Said a dying soldier to a chaplain: "If I believed a tenth of what you claim to believe, I'd be doing ten times more about it." After all, we do not actually believe any more than we are willing to put into practise.

It is related that during the reign of Oliver Cromwell the government ran out of silver coinage. Cromwell sent his men to a cathedral to see if they could find any silver. They reported: "The only silver we can find is in the statues of the saints standing in the corners." "Good," he replied, "we'll melt down the saints and put them into circulation!" Certainly, today the need of the hour is that the saints be melted down in revival fires and put into circulation winning the lost.

God help us to combine prophetic doctrine with practical duty. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be?" Prepared and expectant, purified and separated, at peace among ourselves, hastening His coming as we witness and work and win.

X

NOTHING IN HIS HAND

MODERNISM would have us believe that Samson was only a mythical character of Hebrew folklore. But we know that he was a man mightily used of God—a strange man, an eccentric man, to be sure. I have thought that the greatest riddle Samson gave to the world was himself. But, after all, is it not a mystery how God can use any of us human riddles to His glory?

> *"How Thou canst think so well of me,*
> *And be the God Thou art,*
> *Is darkness to my intellect,*
> *But sunshine to my heart!"*

And what if Samson was peculiar? Someone has said, "Better a thousand times effective peculiarity than ineffective ordinariness."

You know the story of Samson's adventure with the lion (Judges 14: 5, 6):

"Then went Samson down, and his father and mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done."

You will observe in this brief account twin truths, two parallel statements closely related and full of meaning for us today. On the one hand, we read of Samson, "And he had nothing in his hand"; on the other, "And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him."

As a boy, I got the impression from illustrated Bible stories that Samson was a massive giant about three times the size of an average man. As a matter of fact, the Word states nothing to indicate that. Indeed, that was exactly the thing that puzzled Samson's enemies: there was nothing about him to give the impression of tremendous strength. He was just an ordinary man separated unto the Lord. Ordinary men separated unto the Lord have always been a riddle to this world, and men are bewildered trying to account for the secret of their power. The Spirit of the Lord comes mightily upon men who go down to Timnath unimpressive in self and with nothing in their hands.

I am sure that if I were walking to the next town today and knew that somewhere on the way there was the possibility that a lion would roar upon me, I would not set out with nothing in my hand. I would carry the biggest gun available, and even then I would likely change my mind and not go at all! But Samson started out empty-handed. If there was to be power to cope with lions it must come from somewhere else and it did. And the application is this: In the Christian experience the power of the Lord comes mightily upon those who carry nothing in their hands.

At the very outset of the life in Christ this holds true. The sinner has nothing in himself to commend him to the mercies of God. No amount of good works, moral-

ity, character, personal ability, gifts, culture, can merit the Father's favor.

> *" Nothing in my hand I bring,*
> *Simply to Thy cross I cling."*

Conversion is an empty-handed turning from sin to the Saviour. It is an old story of the artist who engaged a street beggar to come to his studio to pose as the prodigal son. The tattered tramp, meanwhile, got hold of better clothes and went to his appointment so much improved in appearance that the artist could not use him. He wanted him just as he was. So must sinners come to Christ. " Just as I am without one plea but that Thy Blood was shed for me "—that is the approach of empty-handedness.

But I am concerned chiefly with Christians who are defeated in spiritual conflict, who have gone down to Timnath and instead of rending the lion have been rent and grievously wounded. " The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour " (I Pet. 5: 8), and hundreds of believers bear the marks of tooth and claw. The reason is not hard to find. The Spirit of the Lord came not mightily upon them because they went forth with something in hand, weapons of their own choosing from a human arsenal, and God did not honor their selfish means but suffered the lion to tear them.

Christians are defeated in daily living because they have fought the devil with the weapons of earth: their own resources, will power, moral stamina. Our Lord vanquished the adversary with three verses from

Deuteronomy. Then certainly we should conquer him with the whole Bible! We can carry nothing in hand that will rend the lions of Timnath. The Spirit must destroy them with the sword of the Word.

There is misunderstanding here. You will observe that Gideon and his followers carried no weapon against the Midianites. They held lamp and pitcher and trumpet, but there was no weapon in hand and their cry was, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." It was the invisible weapon that prevailed; the Midianites furnished the visible swords when the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow. Now, the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Eph. 6: 17) but, mind you, it is the sword of the Spirit. It is not your sword or mine. We cannot wield the Word. All we can do is so to yield to the indwelling Spirit that He can use His sword. Christians make the grievous mistake here of trying to handle the sword themselves; they try wielding instead of yielding! I cannot understand the Word, nor teach it, nor preach it, nor use it against the adversary. I must go forth empty-handed, but yielded to the Spirit Who lives in me, confident that when the lion roars, He Who is greater that he that is in the world will use His sword. If I go forth carrying even the sword of the Spirit in my own hand as though I could use it, I shall fail. The Spirit of the Lord must come mightily upon me and wield His weapon—and His wielding follows my yielding.

The saints of Revelation 12: 11 overcame the devil by the Blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. There is not an overcoming testimony in Christians and churches today, because the Spirit is not

empowering us; we are fighting with weapons of our own devising. Sunday-school teachers rush to classes with a quarter in one hand and a quarterly in the other, unconsecrated, prayerless, and wonder why they are as sounding brass and clanging cymbal. Preachers get their sermons from some pulpit manual and, not being converted, are unable to strengthen the brethren. Choirs sing with artistic skill but without melody in their hearts unto the Lord. There is much in the hand but nothing in the heart, so there is no testimony and the sheep are not fed; neither is Satan defeated.

Surely this accounts for so much ineffective preaching today. One of the hardest lessons for ministers to learn is to die to one's own gift—popularity, learning, reputation; to be buried as the corn or wheat; to decrease that He may increase; to be only the friend of the Bridegroom, rejoicing only in the Bridegroom's voice. Churches make it still harder for him to learn this lesson, because in the calling of pastors they enquire first about his education, personality, social gifts, practical ability—they measure him by what he has in his hand! The enduement of the Spirit is forgotten or pushed to an unimportant place. Whether or not the power of the Lord rests mightily upon him is secondary; what has he in his hand?

It is significant that in II Corinthians 10: 10, Paul's critics said his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible. Now, these are exactly the two points that are made to count for most among ministers today. If he has a commanding presence, attractive personality, and if he is a pulpit orator, the vote is unanimous to call him. Yet the greatest preacher of the early church and,

next to our Lord, the mightiest messenger of the Gospel of all time would have failed on both counts! Indeed, he gloried in infirmities and rejoiced that when he was weak, he was strong. The power of the Lord rested mightily upon him and he had nothing in his hand!

As at Cana of Galilee, it is only when the natural wine of our own sufficiency gives out that the supernatural wine is furnished from above. Consider Moses. If ever a young man seemed qualified for success was it not he? Had he not grown up in the courts of Egypt? Had he not chosen to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? Yet it was necessary to take a forty-year postgraduate course with the sand and sheep of Midian before he was seasoned for service. At the end of that long discipline God appeared, and see what He asks: "What is that in thine hand?" (Exod. 4: 2). What was it? Only a shepherd's rod! Poor Moses, with his brilliant start and his promising career, has come down to a shepherd's rod! But that very rod symbolized his humiliation, his failure in the eyes of the world, the breaking of his self-sufficiency, to which every man must come before God can use him greatly. Moses had come to the backside of the desert, and to the mountain of God (Exod. 3: 1), and it is always on the backside of the desert, at the end of self, that we come to the mountain of God's revelation and call. Poor Moses, once so confident and impulsive, is now so broken that God must persuade him to return to Egypt.

And now that he has come to the shepherd's rod, God asks him to cast even that down, that there may be nothing in his hand. But that very rod becomes now

the "rod of God" (Exod. 4: 20). It is always thus. There must come the day when God makes us stand empty-handed before Him, that we may learn to prevail not by might or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts. Hudson Taylor said he once thought God was looking for men strong enough to use but he had learned that God was looking for men weak enough to use!

How we have ignored this truth of empty-handedness in the churches! Not only in the calling of preachers but in the choosing of deacons, of church workers all along the line. The original qualification of a deacon, "full of the Holy Ghost," is set aside, and social standing, financial worth, business ability, position in the community—these weapons in his hand are often the deciding factors. The church itself goes forward with many things in hand—programs, propaganda, high-pressure methods, human enthusiasm, prestige, learning, efficiency—but the Spirit of the Lord does not rest mightily upon it.

It is possible to carry all these in hand yet be defeated, because we depend upon them and not upon the Spirit. God wants us to drop them. Some of them He may have us take up again, even as Moses took up the rod. Some we may never use again. But not until we drop them and stand empty-handed shall the power of the Lord come mightily upon us.

The only vessel that God can truly fill is an empty one. It is not the gold or silver vessel that counts but the empty one ever before Him for His filling. The measure of our fulness is our emptiness. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And not only

shall we be filled as we believe, but we shall overflow; from our innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. Notice that Samson not only prevailed for himself, but he later gathered honey from the carcass of the lion for his father and mother. There was an overflowing blessing to pass on. The day you stand with nothing in your hand, relying on no gift, ability, resource of your own, the Spirit of the Lord shall come mightily upon you and you shall rend the lion as though it were a kid. Things once impossible will become easy. Doubts and fears will flee away. And in the carcasses of the defeated lions there will be the honey of joy for yourself and others.

This is why God through the ages has used most unpromising material to His glory, why not many wise, noble, and mighty are called. He has chosen instruments which we never would have thought of selecting and has passed by the able, learned, and mighty men who by every human test seemed to meet the requirements. He is ever looking for men with nothing in their hands, that no flesh should glory in His Presence. Mind you, this puts no premium on ignorance and poverty. Empty-handedness does not mean empty-headedness. A man sent a note to John Wesley, saying, " God does not need your learning." Wesley replied, " God does not need your ignorance." But greater than a full head is a full heart and God must fill it. The complement of a full heart is an empty hand, a realization that we are nothing and have nothing in ourselves, that our sufficiency is in Him alone.

So these twin truths stand parallel in the life triumphant: " He had nothing in his hand ": " And the Spirit

of the Lord came mightily upon him." It was inevitable that we should read next, "And he rent him [the lion] as he would have rent a kid." There must be, first, human vacuity, emptiness, nothing of self. Raphael wore a candle fixed to his forehead while he painted, "to keep himself out of the picture." Well has Dr. Pace illustrated the word "Christian" with the "ian," meaning "I am nothing."

"Let our debts be what they may, however great or small,
So soon as we have nought to pay, our Lord forgives us all;
'Tis perfect poverty alone that sets the soul at large,
While we can call one mite our own, we have no full discharge."

Then heavenly vitality, power from above, will follow next. So many Christians and churches are not like Samson in this experience at Timnath but like him later when, deprived of strength, he said, "I will go out as at other times before and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him" (Judges 16: 20). They shake themselves as before; there is plenty of "Kingdom work"; Sardis has a name of being alive; religious workers drop exhausted on Sunday nights after much energy of the flesh has been spent in trying to make the wheels go round. We have gone down to Timnath with hands full of weapons of our own choosing; having begun in the Spirit we have sought to perfect ourselves in the flesh. But instead of hands full of honey, we have torn and bleeding hands and we wring them in defeat. We must be emptied of ourselves and filled with Him. Then we may move on to the third

experience, happy victory; the lion destroyed and honey from the carcass, sweetness following strength, and hands full of blessing to share with others.

Human vacuity, heavenly vitality, happy victory—that is the Divine order. It is the empty hand that God fills with honey. Go down to Timnath with empty hands and with full hands you shall come away!

XI

POWER, LOVE, AND A SOUND MIND

IT is becoming an accepted fact that we are living in the most insane age of human history. The high pressure and terrific pace of the times have produced a generation of high-strung, tense neurasthenics, subsisting to an amazing extent on cold drinks, chewing gum, and aspirin tablets. Indeed, the fact that America consumed last year four million pounds of aspirin is a significant straw in the wind.

It is said on good authority that in zoological gardens monkeys have been driven crazy watching people on the outside of the cages, so crazy that a rest cure has been necessary. Considering the way we live nowadays—a way that someone summed up in these words, "Hurry, worry, bury"—it is not surprising that our antics should drive even the apes to distraction.

Unhappily, many believers carry their nervous make-up over into their Christian experience, and, instead of gaining the victory over it, become introspective neurotics, forever taking their spiritual pulse and temperature, jabbing their inner selves with morbid proddings, until their hearts are sick and sore. During the past year I have met more unstrung, fearful, doubting, defeated Christians than ever before. They move from Bible conference to Bible conference. They wade through stacks of books on victory, joy, and peace. They follow

preachers with pitiful stories of imaginary troubles, vainly seeking to escape from spectres and hobgoblins of the mind. They chase the will-o'-the-wisps of fad and ism across swamps of confusion, and flounder year in and year out in the murky fogs of chronic bewilderment.

There is a very depressing brand of mysticism that talks a great deal nowadays in holy phraseology, but gives little evidence of Christian joy and victory. I have observed that those who talk most about being crucified with Christ are often not so dead to self as those who do not have so much to say about it. I recall once in awhile that some of the fine old Christian characters of my boyhood days probably had never read a devotional book and knew little about the different theories of sanctification, but they had a rugged, sturdy, simple faith and a wholesome spirituality that would put most of us to shame.

One becomes a little weary with these inlookers who never can get themselves into just the mood they crave; who emphasize being dead to sin more than being alive to God, and consequently they never seem to become successful corpses; who are always trying to crucify themselves so that they never get around to "Christ liveth in me"; who put their burdens above their blessings, their faith below their fears; who glory in crosses of doubtful make, but wear no crown of rejoicing. These talk much of the "fellowship of his suffering," but we have observed that those who have entered most truly into that, advertise it least. The whole life of such poor souls is shot through and through with such a pallor or artificial saintliness that one recoils from such gloomy piety to say, "Surely this cannot be that

hilarious faith of the early church, that new wine of Pentecost, that victory that could cry out from Roman prisons, ' Rejoice in the Lord alway.' "

We believe that God in offering up His own Son for us all procured for us a more radiant and healthy life than most of us believers have. Surely we " have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but . . . the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father " (Rom. 8: 15). Yet the spirit of fear which today grips our national life, which throttles the business world, which is driving the peoples of the earth to arm themselves to the teeth—this same spirit shows up in sickly Christians and in perplexed churches.

How often we have been hampered in evangelistic meetings by having to spend so much time stirring up the church that we had little opportunity to preach to the unsaved. The church should be in such healthy condition that it would never need to spend weeks checking its own symptoms and doctoring its own troubles, but could occupy its time going after the lost. Much time is taken in defending our positions and holding our own that ought to be spent in aggressive, forward action, carrying the war into the enemy's territory. The devil has seen to it that individual Christians and churches take so much time treating themselves that they never get around to attacking him on his own premises.

Now, surely we recognize the need of heart-searching and taking stock of ourselves, keeping our own vineyards while we look after the vineyards of others. A periodic visit to the doctor for a physical examination is a good thing; but to go every day to learn how our

blood pressure and heart action get along is the way of a neurotic. So Christians who keep themselves in a morbid state displease God, and waste time that ought to be spent in objective testimony and service when they become overconscientious and self-condemnatory.

It is possible to become so afraid that we may get out of God's will, that in the very fear itself we are already out of His will! After all, God is our Father and what sort of father would that be whose child must walk in nervous tension before him? Of course, this does not excuse wrongdoing. Sin must be confessed and the heart cleansed if fellowship is to be restored. But the Word itself declares that the very antithesis of this bondage of fear is the glorious fact that ours is the spirit of adoption whereby we may nestle in confidence close to the heart of God and call Him, " Abba, Father."

His Word also tells us, " For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind " (II Tim. 1: 7). Ours is the spirit of power, but one never would get that impression from watching many Christians today. There ought to be that about every believer which would declare his having come into contact with God, a spirit of victory and strength, an overcoming might that all hell cannot withstand. The very boldness of Peter and John was a testimony, as well as what they said, for we read, " When they saw the boldness . . ." (Acts 4: 13).

But right here the devil gets in his deceitful work. We realize, of course, that in ourselves we are nothing, that it is by the Holy Spirit that we prevail. We dare not offer " strange fire " to the Lord, and the flesh cannot please Him. But when we surrender all to Him

and receive the fulness of His Spirit, we have a right to rise from our knees declaring, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4: 13). Now, some are so afraid that they will not be humble, so afraid that they will work in the energy of the flesh that they never have liberty. They are afraid to "let go," for fear that they will displease God. So they live hampered and repressed in the bondage of fear. They are so afraid of making mistakes that their lives are one big mistake.

We may as well recognize that some mistakes will be made. The men who have moved the world for God have made mistakes. Peter and Paul made them, and so have all who followed in their train. That does not excuse mistakes. They had to be confessed and forgiven. But God knew the general purpose of their lives and the intent of their hearts, and when God knows that we are utterly yielded to do His will, He puts the inner state of the heart and will above occasional blunders. It is better to make errors walking by faith than to commit the greater sin of never walking by faith.

We have never been impressed by Paul's conduct when on trial in Jerusalem (Acts 23: 1–11). It compares poorly with the conduct of our Lord when He was on trial. His opening remarks, his retort to the high priest, his cleverly setting Pharisees against Sadducees does not seem to come up to a very high standard. Yet that night the Lord stands by Paul to cheer and encourage him. That does not condone Paul's behavior on trial by any means, but it does show that God knew the inner intent and purpose of Paul's heart to please God and preach the Gospel. God bears mercifully with

the man who honestly is committed to His will, and will be patient with much weakness if we are utterly His. On the other hand, He will accept no amount of good deeds if the heart is not His. One may do many lovely things from a selfish purpose and, conversely, one may make many mistakes with a holy purpose. A sickly fear of making mistakes has kept many a Christian from living in the spirit of power.

The early Christians started out in the power of the Holy Spirit and were absolutely invincible. Nothing could stand before them. Men could not resist the wisdom with which they spoke. It was only in later years, when the church compromised with the world, that it began to lose power and to resort to human wisdom and enthusiasm to carry on.

There ought to be about every Christian a sense of power and triumph. He ought to impress the world as being charged with a Divine electricity, drunk on heavenly wine. He has no right to cringe through this world and talk in an apologetic tone. If we have the only answer to the world's problem, the only cure for its ills, we have a right to speak with authority and not be cowed by the fear of man. The world had better cringe, and cringe it will if we call its bluff and meet its bravado with the courage of God.

We are persuaded that many precious testimonies are being lost today because of enervating fear. Often a supersensitiveness and overconscientiousness becomes so fixed in the heart of a well-meaning and sincere Christian that he mistakes it for a mark of piety and confuses it with true humility. To distrust self is indeed proper, but when we have committed all to God, then to

go on doubting is to doubt God. So Jeremiah needs to be braced up and bidden not to be afraid of rebellious faces. Ezekiel is given an adamant face, and Timothy is exhorted not to despise his youth. For ours is the spirit of power and Satan dreads that power, so he tricks us with ruses so clever that we fancy we please God, while in reality we posses a cowardice that is not humility.

But God has also given us the Spirit of love. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4: 18). One would have expected that verse to say that he who fears is not made perfect in faith or in courage, since we usually think of these as being opposites of fear. But it is "love," because faith worketh by love. Just as a mother fears nothing when her child is in danger, because she is overmastered by love, so the Christian fears nothing when love constrains him. This shifts the entire emphasis in much of our striving to master timidity. For instance, we may not be able to muster enough courage, but we can have love enough to cast out fear, for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit if we will receive it. So the issue is not, Am I brave enough? but, Do I love enough?

Ours is also the gift of a sound mind. Matthew Henry calls it "quietness of mind, a peaceable enjoyment of ourselves, for we are oftentimes discouraged in our way and work by the creatures of our own fancy and imagination, which a sober, solid, thinking mind would obviate and would easily answer." If ever we needed sanctified common sense, it is today.

If Satan cannot lead Christians into worldliness, then he endeavors to make them queer. Spirituality becomes perverted into an unwholesome, false mysticism. Feelings triumph over faith, and oversensitive nerves deceive into all sorts of false conviction and repentance. Visions are looked for to decide issues that ought to be settled by sanctified judgment.

Of course, " sound mind " means more here than mere common sense. It carries the meaning of discipline, self-control, wise discretion. There is a sound, healthy wholesomeness that honestly and simply commits all to God and then moves along doing His will up to the light given, while, of course, through the Word and prayer and all other means of grace, receiving more light all along. We shall learn as we go to drop things that we had thought were permissible, and we shall also learn to retain things that well-meaning advisers would have us drop! If we are living with clear conscience up to the light given and learning more as we go, there is absolutely nothing to worry about. No loving earthly father would have his child live in tense strain, forever afraid of making a mistake, and our Heavenly Father has not called us to a tight-rope walk. Mrs. Jonathan Goforth touched a perplexed girl on the shoulder and whispered, " Always remember, dear, that God is your Father," and how we need to learn that and be delivered from the bondage of fear to the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father!

I am persuaded that Satan is working havoc not only with the testimony of many Christians, but with their time, talents, even their health, by making them become concerned over trivial worries that are not causing God

any concern at all. The least imperfection becomes magnified by an overworked conscience, and they wallow in remorse, which becomes a worse sin than the actual offence over which they worry! For "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us," and then to grieve about it is to add another sin, the sin of unbelief!

Let us exercise the gifts of God, power, love, and a sound mind, for fear is not of God and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

XII

JESUS CHRIST THE SAME

THERE are many who do not believe this to be a century of progress, but no one will deny that it is a century of change. A cynic has remarked that nothing is permanent except change. From ladies' hats to legislation, from automobiles to art, from furniture to finances, styles and customs and conditions change overnight. World events tumble over each other with barely enough time to happen. A week-old newspaper is as out of date nowadays as was a month-old paper fifty years ago. Pity the lecturer on current events! By the time he has prepared his speech and found somewhere to deliver it his current events will have begun already to breathe the fragrance of lavender and old lace.

In such a breath-taking age men look here and there for a point of permanence. Some rely upon financial investments, but money has been setting a record for a quick getaway. Others seek to endure through fame, honors, position; but bricks follow bouquets and the famous are soon the forgotten. Some rely upon friends, but too many friends, like shadows, follow only in sunny weather and even the best must sometime be called away. Thousands seek to escape life's boredom through modern fads and isms of many a shade and hue. Someone has said: "The religion of China is Confucian: the

religion of America is confusion." Men wander in a wilderness of cults seeking lasting satisfaction.

A man who had been a Baptist, Methodist, and a Presbyterian told his temporary pastor, "I'm planning to join the Congregationalists." Thoughtfully, the old minister replied, "Well, I don't think it does any harm to change labels on an empty bottle!" Millions of "empty bottles" today think to fill themselves by a change of labels.

A friend of mine gave me a book containing the statements of faith, or rather of the lack of faith, of many prominent modern writers. I read it one afternoon and was growing weary of it, when the radio began to broadcast from somewhere those dear old lines:

"Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou Who changest not, abide with me!"

I threw down the book and said, "Thank God, I don't have to read such drivel, for I know the changeless Christ in this changing world, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Have you ever thought what a boundless satisfaction there is for us in those first four words, "Jesus Christ, the same"? I am sure that many who read this have found along the trail of the years that in this life things do not stay the same. Perhaps there are some who know that once your eye was bright and your nerves atingle with the wine of health, but the years have taken their toll and now when the doctor shakes his head and pain cuts its furrows, you know that health does not stay the same. Or maybe a few years ago you were in

better circumstances: you were meeting your financial obligations and not wrestling nightly with a nightmare of notes and mortgages; but now adversity has become a regular boarder at your house and you know that circumstances do not stay the same.

Again, you have been impressed, doubtless, with the fickleness of human nature—your own, for instance. You have had your rare moments when you wanted to build tabernacles and house the vision, but you have had to descend to the drab and commonplace and you sigh, "Why am I not always like I am sometimes?" So you grieve over your uncertain nature, as changeable as a thermometer in March, and you know that does not stay the same.

Or you may have been made aware in a bitter manner of the changeableness of others. You have trusted and been disappointed; your own familiar friend who did eat your bread has lifted his heel against you. Perhaps you must live or work with someone who can change moods faster than a chameleon can turn color and you sometimes wish he were not so ideal at any particular time, if only he were dependably the same all the time.

More serious still, it may be that years ago you enjoyed the fellowship of one who meant more than anything else earthly, but there came the day when as the minister said the old familiar committal and, as one grave closed, another opened in your heart and you realized as never before that earthly relationships cannot remain the same.

Since all this is true, what a relief it is to turn from these changing scenes to Jesus Christ, the same. Here is One Who never fails the heart that leans on Him for

repose. Health may fail us but His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Adversity may crash upon us, but He draws nearer than a brother, and whispers, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Friends may desert us, so that, like Paul, we may have to say, "No man stood with me." But we may also say with him in the next verse, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me" (II Tim. 4: 16, 17). We may have to say with Jeremiah: "The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned! For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim"; but we may also say with him, "Thou, O Lord, remainest forever; thy throne from generation to generation" (Lam. 5: 16, 17, 19). And even when death draws near He assures us, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11: 25).

"My love is ofttimes low;
My joy still ebbs and flows;
But peace with Him remains the same;
No change Jehovah knows.
I change, He changes not;
My Christ can never die;
His love, not mine, the resting place;
His truth, not mine, the tie."

The Word declares that He is Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever. If we are to appreciate what Jesus Christ the same today means, we must know something of Jesus Christ the same yesterday. That truncated Christianity which disregards the pre-incarnation Christ, the Christ of history, and the Christ of the

future, and emphasizes only a subjective experience of a Christ Who need not ever have lived at all is as absurd as it is impossible.

We need to be careful as to how we speak of Jesus Christ the same yesterday. Many think of our Lord as though He began to be only nineteen hundred years ago in Bethlehem. But there is an eternity in " Jesus Christ the same yesterday," as well as in " Jesus Christ the same forever." Eternity stands on either side of the Christ of today in Hebrews 13: 8. Strictly speaking, there is no past tense with the Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself used the eternal present tense in John 8: 58: " Before Abraham was, I AM." " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God " (John 1: 1, 2). We need to assert afresh the eternal pre-existence of our Lord. The " yesterday " of Hebrews 13: 8 is without beginning.

But because this truth is infinite and we are finite, we more readily think of Jesus Christ yesterday as the human Christ Who trod the roads of Galilee. Critics ridicule our " theories " and insist that they want to live by facts. Then what will they do with the historic Christ, the greatest fact of all time? It is amazing how men will boast of " living by facts " and ignore the pre-eminent fact of history, the life of our Lord. Consider Jesus Christ yesterday: born in another man's stable, buried in another man's tomb; living in a little land about one-fourth the size of Illinois; in His public ministry never over a hundred miles from home; writing no books, leading no armies, trusting His truths with a few plain and unpromising disciples; dying the death of a

criminal outside the city walls. Yet that life stands alone, the one perfect chapter in all the annals of time. What He said and did proves Who He is. There is no answer save Simon Peter's (Matt. 16: 16) to the Christ of yesterday.

Here again we need to speak carefully. Jesus Christ of yesterday did not end in a sepulchre. Christians are not living on a memory. Our Lord only began to do and teach yesterday (Acts 1: 1). How else can you explain another stupendous fact of history, the Christian Church? A few days after Calvary the disciples were brokenhearted, in despair. Some of them went fishing to forget the bitter disappointment. The fair dream had faded; there was a guarded grave.

But a few days later these disciples were defying the world with a message of victory. They were not the same men and never were again. What happened? The Lord Jesus Christ had come from the grave with a new body, had promised them His Presence, had returned to the Father, had sent them the Paraclete. No other explanation can account for the early church, a fact second only to the life of our Lord.

The heroes of faith of the past nineteen centuries were not living upon a mere memory. Our Lord has been living in the hearts and working through the heads and hands of men: indwelling Paul, so that he could say, "Not I, but Christ"; sustaining martrys through dungeon, fire and sword; transforming Augustine from a slave of lust into a saint; in Luther heralding the Reformation; guiding Tyndale's hand in Bible translation; preaching in earth's far corners through missionaries; evangelizing England through Wesley and

America through Moody; healing broken bodies through consecrated physicians and nurses; ministering to the slums in mission work; teaching the Word in faithful pulpits; living in millions of ordinary Christian lives; shining through pain-furrowed faces of invalid saints—in Galilee He only began to do and to teach!

Jesus Christ yesterday is the Eternal Son from everlasting with the Father, sharing Him in creation. Jesus Christ yesterday is the Word made flesh, taking the form of a servant, made sin for us, though He knew no sin. Jesus Christ yesterday is the risen and glorified Christ, living His life in millions of lives through nineteen centuries.

He is also Jesus Christ the same today. Some Christians, like John the Baptist in prison, have grown discouraged because our Lord is not setting up His kingdom as they expected. Some have begun to wonder in their hearts, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" It is true that the world is not being converted: that never was our Lord's purpose. But He is doing exactly what He purposed to do in the present age, and His program is following the Father's schedule. The blind are seeing, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Eyes blinded by the god of this world are still being opened. Sin's cripples walk in newness of life. Modern Naamans dip in the fountain filled with blood and lose their leprosy. Ears are opened to the music of heaven. The dead in trespasses and sins are quickened to eternal life. And over the wide world the poor hear the

Gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ is still the same and blessed is he whosoever is not offended in Him.

There are many believers today who are actually offended with the Lord. From dungeons of doubt and discouragement they ask cynical questions, their hearts are rebellious. The Lord is not doing things as they expected, and they are offended in Him. Now we know that He is an offence to Israel (Isa. 8: 14; Rom. 9: 33); we know that the cross is an offence to the world (Gal. 5: 11; I Cor. 1: 23); we know that our Lord was and is an offence to the Pharisees (Matt. 15: 12) and to the unbelieving Nazarenes (Matt. 13: 57) and to superficial disciples (Matt. 13: 21; John 6: 61). But what a sad thing that true disciples should ever be offended because of unanswered prayer, or adversity, or because He does not follow their schedule! He has spoken precious truths to us that we should not be offended (John 16: 1), and they that love God's Word shall not be offended (Ps. 119: 165); but it is a very prevalent weakness today among Christians in these tragic times. We need a fresh realization of Jesus Christ the same today.

He is still doing mighty works and if He is not doing them in your life, your church, your community, it is because of your unbelief. The only thing in existence that can limit the power of the Lord Jesus Christ is our unbelief. He is hindered today by the same things that have always hindered Him—unbelieving Nazarenes calling Him the carpenter's son and reducing Him in their thinking to the stature of a common man, and discouraged Christians letting the dungeon of circumstances becloud His deity. He is the same as ever, but

He can mean to us only as much as our faith lets Him mean.

The eternal Christ is with us today, and wherever men yield to Him He works as of old. Men ask, Is the day of miracles past yet? There is no "day" of miracles. Miracles are simply the supernatural operation of God, and He is timeless—there is no "day" with Him. He has seen fit to perform different types of miracles to suit His purpose in different periods of earthly time, but His supernatural power is always the same, and wherever He regenerates and directs a human heart there you have a miracle. There is abundant evidence all over the world to a wonder-working God and to a Christ Who is the same today. There are thousands of lives that can be accounted for in no other way. The experiences of certain well-known faith-missions, for instance, testify daily to a living Christ and a prayer-answering God.

But, after all, the proof of Jesus Christ the same today is to know Him. For those who do not know Him no mere argument is enough. For those who do know Him no argument is necessary. It is possible to know Him historically, as a fact of history, or to know Him theologically and assent intellectually to the doctrines about Him, and yet not know Jesus Christ the same today. And it is possible to know Him experimentally as Saviour and yet walk with eyes holden while He travels with us the Emmaus road a veiled figure. May He open the Scriptures, open your eyes, open your understanding, as He did for these long ago!

Finally, He is Jesus Christ the same forever. It would not be enough that He is the same yesterday and

today if somewhere down the road He should cease to be. But the best is yet to come. He has promised to be with us alway, even unto the end of the age. And He has promised to return for those who know Him. Later He will come again to reign over a redeemed earth, and finally He shall triumph over the last foe and reign forever over a new heaven and a new earth.

It is true that "now we see not yet all things put under him." Sorrow removed, sickness vanquished, sin finally conquered, death destroyed—in our actual experiences we see these things not yet. But amid all that we do not see we do see Him, the Eternal Positive amid earth's negatives. And He is the pledge of all these things, for what with Him is possible He is soon to make actual, when the last enemy is destroyed and He reigns unhindered. Let us not allow the things we see not yet put under Him hinder us from seeing Him!

So, in this changing day, believers rejoice in a changeless Christ. He is the same yesterday, and because of Who He was yesterday, the Son of God dying for the sins of the world, He meets the problem of our yesterdays, our guilt before a holy God. He is the same today, and because of Who He is today, our Lord and our Advocate, He meets the problem of our todays, He directs our lives and pleads our cases before the Father. He is the same forever, and because He is, He meets the problem of our tomorrows, He assures us of life eternal and a home with Him.

We must be careful to remember that at the heart of our faith stands a Person. It is possible to exalt some doctrine above Him in Whom all the doctrines about Him consist. It is possible to fall into thinking of Him

as the centerpiece of a program, a philosophy, a set of principles, with ourselves His lawyers, instead of thinking of Him as a Living Person, with ourselves His witnesses. It is possible to lose the reality of His Presence in abstract theorizing about Him. It is only as we know Him in forgiveness and fellowship, as we share with Him in sacrifice and suffering and service, that we become like Him and can lead others to Him. Back of the Bible and the church and the creeds and the programs and the activities of Christians stands the Eternal Christ, and we must in our thinking and living and witnessing give Him the pre-eminence even over those things which are of His very life. Our business is to know Him and to make Him known: anything less is useless, anything more is superfluous.

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